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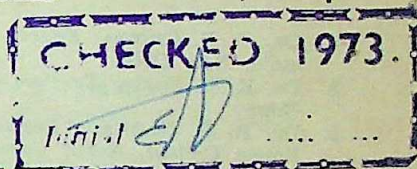
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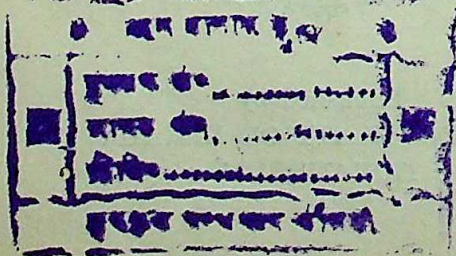
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Partition of Bengal — 1947

BY

A. K. MAJUMDAR

Bengal was partitioned in 1905, reunited in 1911 and re-partitioned in 1947. But the reunion of 1911 left three Bengali Hindu majority districts in Bihar which were united to Bengal when the States were reorganized after Independence. If these three districts had been left with Bengal in 1911, she would have had a Hindu majority, so that probably there would have no cause to partition her again in 1947.

The reasons which led to the final partition of 1947—with which this paper is concerned—are complex and would need years of patient research to unravel. In the meantime we can present certain unpublished materials and indicate certain trends which may help the scholars in their investigations. Three broad questions may be framed in this connection, namely, (1) was the partition inevitable, (2) who were responsible for partition and (3) was it beneficial or at all necessary. The third question is actually a corollary of the first, and we need not discuss it at all. Actually at present we need confine our attention only to the second problem, and investigate the process which led to partition.

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Language is the link between the two Bengals, and at the early phase of its development Muslim contribution was probably of no less importance than that of the Hindus. But there was sharp cleavage with the past tradition during the 19th Century, when Bengali prose was born. The highly Sanskritized Bengali of the first half of the 19th century is usually ascribed to the Pundits of Fort William College but it is overlooked that Raja Rammohun Roy, the father of Bengali language, had set the pace. On behalf of the Fort William College Pundits it may be said that the only language they knew was Sanskrit, but Rammohun was a polyglot, and not only knew Urdu, but had a fair knowledge of Persian and Arabic. Yet his Bengali writings are not only as Sanskritized as that of his contemporary Pundits,

but does not betray any influence of Persian or Arabic. The reason may be that Rammohun was mainly engaged in translating Sanskrit scriptures but that does not alter the fact.

However, the great phase of Bengali literature was from 1865, when Bankimchandra's *Durgēsanandini* was published, to the death of Rabindranth in 1941. During this period of nearly eight decades Hindus dominated Bengali literature, and seemed to have transformed it into a vehicle for transmission of Hindu ideals. There was only one exception of whom we shall speak presently, but in the main Bengali Hindus dominated all fields of intellectual activities.

It is difficult to assign any single cause or even causes for the sudden spurt of Hindu brilliance and Muslim apathy without going into the history of this period which is beyond the scope of this paper. The result however was that the Bengali Muslims spun themselves into a cocoon of their past glory which included the achievements of the Saracens and the Turks, not to speak of the Sultans and Mughal Emperors. Hindus on the other hand were drawing inspiration from Rajput, Maratha, and Sikh heroes, particularly Mahārāṇa Pratāp, Mahārāṇa Rājasimha, Durgādās Rāthod, Chhatrapati Śivāji, Samarthā Rāmdas, Guru Gōvind Singh, and Baṇḍa, that is, the persons who not only brought the Mughal rule to an end, but destroyed Muslim hegemony in India. This antagonistic approach to history created a hiatus between educated leaders of the two communities which was never bridged.

Muslims did write in Bengali and all of them were not poor writers. There were many competent writers, and a few good ones, but there was only one among them whose contribution to the literature was as great as that of any Hindu, and greater than most; he is Kasi Nazrul Islam. Personally Nazrul has been above all communal considerations, and some of his devotional songs could be written by an orthodox Hindu. However, in some of his most famous poems which gained instant popularity, he used a large number of Arabic and Persian words; his *ghazal* also became very popular. Apart from the fact, that Nazrul's choice of word was invariably happy, the use of Persian words in Bengali poems to create an esoteric atmosphere had been attempted before him, particularly Mōhit Lāl Majumdār, but he never gained Nazrul's popularity.

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Nazrul was a bard of nationalism, but on the Muslim youth his poems had a strange effect. Amir Ali had preached with some effect through his Central National Muhammeden Association (found in 1877), that Urdu and not Sanskritized Bengali was the language of the Muslims of Bengal. Thus ground had been in preparation for a long time when the Bengali Muslims found in Nazrul, a Muslim poet of Bengal, and totally disregarding his theme, adopted his style of using Arabic and Persian words. This tendency became very marked in the late thirties and early forties, though there were exceptions, like Maulāna Akram Khān, the most rabidly communal of all journalists in Bengal. During this period, great controversy was raging over Hindi and Urdu, and Bengali Muslims unreservedly supported Urdu as the national language. It is doubtful whether there would have been a partition if the Bengali Muslims had unequivocally declared Bengali as their mother tongue in 1947 instead of doing so a few years later.

Actually in 1947, when the country was divided, the Muslims of Bengal no less than those of the Punjab seemed to be repeating Hāli:

rukhsat āye Hindustān āye bustān-be- khazān
rah chuke teri bahut dīn ham bedeshī mehmān

(Farewell to thee, oh! Hindustan, the garden of autumn; we foreign guests have stayed too long).

The separation freed them from the burden of all non-Islamic heritage of Indian traditions.

Bengal became politically conscious before the rest of India, which led to her partition in 1905 and the Partition provided the incentive to the development of a revolutionary movement. Inspiration for this movement was partly derived from European models like the French Revolution, and the Italian War of Unification, and Mazzini and Garibaldi became to a section of the Bengalis almost what Chairman Mao and Premier Chou are to-day to a particular section in Bengal. But the *swadeshi* movement could not thrive entirely on foreign heroes; hence Mahārāna Pratāp, Śivāji and others were selected as rallying points of nationalist struggle, as symbols of India's urge to free herself from foreign domination. But as stated above, the symbolism was

lost on the Muslims, not unnaturally since the first phase of revolutionary movement (1905-1921) was inextricably linked with image worship, particularly Kālī or *Shakti*.

This would have normally acted as a deterrent to any Muslim from joining the movement, which the British Government had convinced them was detrimental to Muslim interests. These are well-known facts, but what is usually overlooked is that the Revolutionary leaders at no time did make any attempt to recruit Muslim youths to their party. Actually in Dacca, Comilla and Barisal they had to come out with their followers to save Hindus from Muslim hooligans during communal riots. There were other reasons also, which possibly justified the attitude of the Revolutionary leaders, but the fact is that even after 1921 when the Revolutionary parties were practically free of all religious practices, they still remained pure Hindu organizations. The Revolutionary Parties were in practice upper caste Hindu associations, open to Brahmins, Vaidyas, and Kayasthas; Gopinath Shah and a few others were exceptions, but their participation in freedom struggle was as much indicative of their community's role in the revolutionary movement as the performance of Dr. Mēghnād Sāhā was in the academic field. Condition has changed since 1947.

The Revolutionary movement was an underground movement and had to be conducted along certain narrow limits. But its effects became ominous when gradually the Revolutionary Parties began to dominate Bengal Congress and, as in other provinces, in Bengal too the Congress became a Hindu organization. The Gandhi-ite group led by Mr. Satish Chandra Ghōsh, Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghōsh, Mr. Prafulla Chandra Sen, Mr. Haripada Chatterjee and others were no better. The overwhelming majority of weavers in Bengal were Muslim, and Gandhiji's message of Khadi may have had some attraction for them. What special effort, if any, was made to establish contact between Muslim weavers and Khadi workers is not known. It is obvious, however, that no rapport was established, and the Muslim mass was left in the hands of the reactionary Maulvis. One of the reasons for this failure was that the Khadi movement was conducted by semi-sannyasis who observed rigid orthodoxy about their food, which could have only rendered them aliens to the Muslims.

The personal magnetism of Deshabandhu C. R. Das held the Hindus and Muslims together for a short period. But after Desha-

bandhu's death, the frail link of communal amity forged by his individual effort snapped and the two communities fell apart never again to unite under a common leader. In 1937, the Congress in Bengal could not put up a single Muslim candidate.

During this period Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the representative of the Congress High Command in Bengal. He was a great leader; but it is doubtful whether he was the best choice for Bengal. The Maulana's high Urdu was a foreign language to all Bengalis, Hindus and Muslims, and he never had any personal following among Bengali Muslims, nor indeed did he ever make any serious effort to become a popular leader of Bengal. He was content with his all-India role from the beginning to the end of his career.

The idea of Pakistan may be traced back up to the year 1928, and there were several schemes propounded at different times by different authors. But the scheme that mattered took shape after the Muslim League Session at Lahore in March 1940 passed its famous resolution, proposed by Mr. Fazlul Huq, then the Prime Minister of Bengal. The word 'Pakistan' was not used in this resolution, and the Hindu Press has been blamed for labelling it as 'Pakistan Resolution', thereby giving it an emotional content which it had lacked hitherto. This may or may not have been true; but certain it is that Mr. Jinnah had given the Indian Muslims rallying point and a war cry. However, having passed this resolution Mr. Jinnah lapsed into a profound silence about the implications of his resolution, and neither Mr. Fazlul Huq nor anyone else could fathom out of him the meaning of 'necessary territorial readjustments' which was a pre-condition of Pakistan.¹

Reading it today, the Lahore resolution does not appear to have been a model of lucidity, but here precisely lay its strength and utility; it could mean anything to anyone. From the beginning of the century, if not from the days of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the Muslims had been tutored to consider themselves as a minority,

1. The operative part of the Lahore resolution was: 'Resolved that .. geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute "Independent States" in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

which needed safeguards, protection, reservation of government jobs etc.; otherwise, they were told, they would be swamped by the rapacious Hindu majority. These minority rights and privileges could be sufficient so long there was an alien Government to enforce those rights. But who would guarantee these rights after the departure of the British? Therefore, Muslim interest demanded a separate homeland where the Muslims were in a majority. The Pakistan demand was a logical outcome of the separate electorate granted under the Morley-Minto reform.

The British took full advantage of the deteriorating communal position. The Lahore resolution was passed on 24 March 1940; on 8 August 1940, the Governor-General issued a statement in which he reiterated that the Government of India Act 1935 and the 'policy and the plans on which it is based' could be examined, in other words changed; but even more momentous was his declaration: 'It goes without saying that they (British Government) could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a Government.'

This was the veto power which Mr. Jinnah had been seeking all his life, and may be he received it as a reward for the Lahore resolution, though there is no evidence on this point. For some unconvincing reason, the editors of the series of documents entitled *'The Transfer of Power'* begin with the year 1942 or Cripps Mission, though the fate of India had been sealed by the August Declaration. For example, the Downing Street Statement of 6 December 1946 concluded: 'There has never been any prospect of success for the Constituent Assembly except upon the basis of an agreed procedure. Should a Constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not of course contemplate—as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a Constitution upon any unwilling parts of the Country.'² Indeed in his statement on 20 Feb-

2. This statement was issued after the breakdown of the London Conference under the Chairmanship of Mr. Attlee and attended by Pandit Nehru, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh.

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ruary 1947, Mr. Attlee recalled that the 1940 declaration was issued under the authority of the Coalition Government, (of which he was the Deputy Prime Minister) though he did not go into its communal implications.

Those implications were by no means unknown to the British politicians, and they admitted amongst themselves that they had given 'veto power' to Mr. Jinnah, and that the Muslim League was blackmailing the Congress.³ But this was the only way open to them to curb the power of the Congress, which came almost as a revelation after the 1937 election under the Government of India Act 1935. This act was a natural sequence of earlier reforms, under which power was gradually transferred from British to Indian hands by instalments. Under the Act of 1935, the Provinces became autonomous and limited power was contemplated to be transferred to Indian hands at the Centre where the undue weightage given to the Princes was expected to act as a sufficient check on national democratic forces. It became apparent, however, that after the war was over the next instalment of transfer of power would fall due, and the nationalist forces under the Congress might capture power at the Centre as effectively as they had done in eight provinces out of eleven. To prevent this natural progress to a democratic form of government, the British Government through the Viceroy declared that the Act of 1935 was to be examined, that is changed.

So far as Lord Linlithgow and his British advisers in India were concerned, they were perfectly content to sit tight on the 1940 Declaration, at least for the duration of the war. But this was rendered impossible due to various factors. Even in England, some Members of Parliament had begun to question the propriety of giving veto power on constitutional progress to a recalcitrant minority. Secondly, Mr. Attlee was making things difficult for Mr. Amery, and began to insist on a fresh approach to the problem

3. These were freely acknowledged by the Secretary of State for India Mr. Amery and the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in their correspondence which have been published in the first two volumes of *The Transfer of Power 1942-7* edited by Mansergh and Lumby, I have dealt with this episode with full references in a paper entitled 'British Attitude To Communal Problems, Last Phase', in a Seminar organized by the Nehru Museum at New Delhi, 20 to 22 December 1971.

after Pearl Harbour. Then Sir Stafford Cripps joined the Cabinet (19 February, 1942). But the decisive pressure seems to have been exerted at this critical moment by the public feeling in the U.S.A. officially transmitted to the British Prime Minister by President Roosevelt.

It is also possible that Mr. Amery had begun to feel a qualm of conscience about relegating the future of a subcontinent to the whims of one man: Mr. Jinnah. Anyway, Mr. Amery in a Minute to Mr. Churchill stated (25 February 1942):

'Any declaration of Indian policy for the future must make it clear, unequivocally, that we stand by our pledge of 1940, to the Moslems and the Princes, that they are not to be coerced into any system of Indian Government of which they disapprove. This is in any case vital at present in view of the possible effects upon the Moslem elements in the Indian Army.

'On the other hand our insistence on agreement has been widely taken as giving Mr. Jinnah a veto on all constitutional progress in India, and as a mere excuse on our part for doing nothing. This has peculiarly infuriated Hindu leaders, vide Sapru's comments on myself as the most disastrous Secretary of State of India has ever known.

'There is only one way of meeting this criticism, and that is to couple with a reaffirmation of our pledge to the minorities, the positive affirmation that the majority can go ahead of itself if it wants to.

'Happily, the distribution of Moslems and Hindus is such that this can be done on a purely provincial basis, by declaring that if a majority of provinces agree upon a constitution, we will accept it so far as they are concerned, leaving dissident provinces to stay out for the time being or even altogether...'⁴

4. Mansergh and Lumby: *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7*, Vol. I Document No. 181; Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru made the remark about Mr. Amery during the course of his Presidential Address to the non-Party Leaders Conference at Delhi on 21 February, 1942. Actually the question of the re-examination of the 1940 Declaration was taken up because of a letter addressed to Mr. Churchill by Liberal Indian Leaders headed by Sir Tej Bahadur, and resulted in the Cripps Mission. Mr. Amery seems to have

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This policy was accepted by Mr. Attlee and Sir Stafford Cripps and formed the basis of Cripps Mission. That this, offer might be taken 'as a British Invitation or incitement to partition' was pointed out among others by Field Marshal Smuts and his old adversary, Gandhiji.⁵

So far as is known Mr. Amery's Minute to Mr. Churchill quoted above was the earliest formulation of policy for dividing India. But the basis of division was that a province should be taken as a unit. Sir Stafford Cripps however refused to face the question unequivocally. In a Press Conference held at New Delhi on 29 March 1942, he said in reply to questions: '..... Two contiguous provinces may form a unit you have to take some existing undisputed area. If you have to settle the areas which can secede afterwards, the various communities will try create areas in which their communities are in a majority and you will get no nearer a decisionNon-acceding provinces shall be given some status as the new Indian Union.'

Next in answer to correspondents' direct question as to what would happen in an 'area' in a part of which one community was

been so stung by Sir Tej Bahadur's remark, that he allowed Sir Stafford Cripps to go to India instead of himself coming with the proposals. In a letter to Lord Linlithgow on 10th March he wrote: 'The next question, then, was who should go out? I confess I felt at first that, both from your point of view and from mine, it might have been better if I had gone. The Secretary of State is in many ways the more obvious person, and you and I know each other's mind so well....I should at any rate have come enjoying a good deal of confidence from the Muslims. On the other hand, I am afraid my going would have been generally interpreted committing the Government to nothing more than a very limited policy of talking about agreement. The Sapru crowd in particular resent all that I have said in the past in the way of bringing out the inherent difficulties of the Indian situation. From the point of view of putting across what is essentially a Conservative policy, both as regards the future and as regards the immediate refusal to transfer control of the Executive there is much to be said for sending out someone who has always been an extreme Left Wing-ger and in close touch with Nehru and Congress....' Ibid, I, Document No. 304, para 2, emphasis added.

5. Field Marshal Smuts to Mr. Churchill, letter dated 5 March 1942, Ibid, Document No. 244. Gandhiji in his interview with Sir Stafford Cripps stated 'that the document (i.e. Cripps' Proposals) was an invitation to the Moslems to create a Pakistan'. Ibid, Document No. 397.

in a majority in another a minority, Sir Stafford Cripps said: The answer to a case of that kind would be, if there be the smallest amount of commonsense amongst the Indians, there would be a rearrangement of boundaries as between the two Unions, and exchange of population to get the larger majority in each.'

This was not a counsel of perfection, but a statement of the logical consequence of the British policy in India. This was to form a Muslim majority and a Hindu majority union, followed by a rectification of boundary and exchange of population, so that instead of Muslim majority or Hindu majority state, there might be a Muslim State and a Hindu State.

This policy was pursued by the successive British Governments till the end.

With the end of war a new situation arose and the Labour Government had to take measures for the protection of British empire in South East Asia. Mr. Attlee in consultation with Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Mr. A. V. Alexander and Sir Stafford Cripps decided that it would be 'a condition precedent to the grant of Dominion Status or independence to India, that India should undertake to provide defence forces sufficient for her own local defence, and in addition assist, in Commonwealth or United Nations interests, in the defence of the "South-East Asia Area".⁶ This doctrine introduced a new element in British policy which now needed a united Indian army. The Cabinet Mission therefore sought to win over Mr. Jinnah by giving him full control over Bengal and Assam in exchange for a weak centre with control over defence, foreign affairs, and communications, because 'defence' becomes meaningless without the other two.

This was the best bargain that Mr. Jinnah had ever made, and he could have got away with it if at this moment he would have made one single friendly gesture towards the Hindus. Instead, he unleashed the Calcutta and Noakhali riots of 1946, and created an impasse by refusing to take part in the Constituent Assembly.

It was in this desperate situation that Lord Mountbatten accepted Mr. V. P. Menon's scheme which envisaged transfer of

6. For details see A. K. Majumdar: *Advent of Independence*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1961, p. 219.

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power to two dominions and partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Mr. Menon had prepared his plan much earlier and had sent it through Mr. Sudhir Ghosh to England where it was peremptorily rejected by Sir Stafford Cripps.⁷ The British Cabinet accepted this plan with great reluctance and only because they could not produce any alternative; Mr. Menon once told me that when he visited England with Lord Mountbatten to explain the plan to the British Cabinet, Sir Stafford Cripps did not speak to him, so great was his disappointment at the failure of his pet scheme. Possibly the 'Heads of Agreement' drafted by Mr. Menon, and to which Lord Mountbatten had taken the consent of both the Congress and the Muslim League, forestalled Sir Stafford Cripps.⁸ For the first time the British Government was faced with a solution agreed upon by both the parties, and no room was left for manoeuvring. But both the sides had paid heavily.

It will be observed that the leaders from neither of the two affected Provinces participated in the decision to partition the Punjab and Bengal; but the decision of the central leaders was later confirmed by votes in the provincial legislatures. But the case of the Punjab and Bengal are slightly different, partition of the former Province having been envisaged much earlier.

On 15 January 1942, Mr. Jinnah had informed the Governor of Bombay, Sir Roger Lunley, that he 'excluded from the Mus-

7. Sudhir Ghosh: *Gandhi's Emissary*, Rupa & Co., Calcutta, 1967, p. 204, f.n. Unfortunately it appears that Mr. Ghosh failed to grasp the significance of Mr. Menon's plan, for which see V. P. Menon: *The Transfer of Power in India*, Orient Longmans, 1957, pp. 358-59.

8. For 'Heads of agreement', see V.P. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 366. 'The 'Heads of Agreement' do not directly mention partition of Provinces, but Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had agreed to it only on that basis. Hence the 3 June plan of the British Cabinet issued after consultation with Lord Mountbatten, with Mr. Menon as his adviser, partition of Bengal and the Punjab was provided for.

Mr. Menon had another grievance against Sir Stafford Cripps. When the Cabinet Mission came, Mr. Menon was the Reforms Commissioner, but in spite of the Viceroy Lord Wavell's plea, Sir Stafford Cripps refused to permit Mr. Menon to attend the Staff meetings, because he was a Hindu. But when the Cabinet Mission got into some difficulties, they obtained Mr. Menon's opinion through Mr. Abell, the Viceroy's Private Secretary.

lim Zone the predominant Hindu area centering on Ambala.⁹ Mr. Jinnah's hands had actually been forced by Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, and in his conversations with Sir Roger Lumley, he actually referred to the difficulties which the Punjab Premier had to face owing to a small Muslim majority, which induced Mr. Jinnah to get rid of Ambala area.

Sir Sikander was opposed to the idea of Pakistan, and some time after the Lahore Resolution was passed, he published a small tract entitled *Outlines of a Scheme of Indian Federation*. On 11 March 1911, Sir Sikander reiterated his scheme during a debate in the Punjab Legislative Assembly in course of which he said: 'We do not ask for freedom, that there may be Muslim Raj here Hindu Raj elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means, I will have nothing to do with it.'¹⁰ Unfortunately, Sir Sikander evoked no response from the British authorities nor did he receive any support from the Muslim leaders of Bengal.

The Cripps Mission must have made it clear to Sir Sikander, that the British Government were prepared to concede some sort of Pakistan. In any case after the return of Sir Stafford Cripps, Sir Sikander felt it necessary to show the real implications of Pakistan for the Punjabis. In a note handed to Sir Bertrand Glancy on 10 July 1942 he set forth a scheme under which if Muslims of Punjab wanted to opt out of India, the Hindus of 'the Ambala Division, and a large part of the Jullundur Division and also the Amritsar District would cease to belong to the Punjab.' Sir Bertrand Glancy while forwarding the note to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, wrote in his covering letter: 'The underlying idea of the scheme is therefore to bring it home to all reasonably-

9. Sir Roger Lumley to Lord Linlithgow, Mansergh and Lumby *op.cit.*, Document No. 13, para 3. Sir R. Lumley had asked Mr. Jinnah to a lunch at the instance of Lord Linlithgow who passed on the gist of the Governor's conversation with Mr. Jinnah to the Secretary of State Mr. Amery, but did not mention that Mr. Jinnah wanted to exclude Ambala from Pakistan; *Ibid.*, Document No. 23, para 4. It should be noted that these letters were available to Mr. Menon, the Deputy Reforms Commissioner.

10. For the text of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan's speech, see V. P. Menon *op.cit.*, pp. 443-589. The basic idea of Mr. Amery's Minute to Mr. Churchill quoted above may have been borrowed from Sir Sikander, at least there are strange resemblance between the two. For Lord Linlithgow's treatment of Sir Sikander, see my paper referred to above in note 3.

ninded men that Pakistan, should it ever eventuate, would mash the Province as it now exists."¹¹

Sir Sikander's opposition to full-blooded Pakistan scheme was due to his realization that if a Muslim Raj were established it would be impossible to retain the Hindu majority area of eastern Punjab, which Mr. Jinnah, who had no provincial ties, was ready to abandon. Actually, though Mr. Jinnah and the British politicians were incessantly talking about the 'Muslim Minority', their sole concern was about the consolidation of Muslim power in areas where they were in a majority. No scheme was ever decided or even considered about the future of the Muslims where they were a real minority. Strangely, the most strident cry for Pakistan came from the U.P. where the Muslims were a minority: the contribution of the U.P. Muslim leaders to the creation of Pakistan needs separate treatment.

The Muslim leaders of Bengal were content to follow the lead of their non-Bengali brethren. Several reasons may be ascribed for this political somnolence: firstly, the urbane U.P. leaders like Liaqat Ali Khan or Choudhry Khaliquzzaman were far too clever for the simple-minded Bengalis, who mostly came from rural areas; under influence of the Aligarh University, the Bengali Muslims at this time had developed a great admiration for their Urdu-speaking brothers. Secondly, few would believe that the Hindus who had fought so bitterly against partition of Bengal in 1905, would ever agree to her partition again; and if Bengal were left intact what was there to bother about; for the Muslims would be in majority, and Mr. Jinnah and the British Government had ruled out any redrawing of Provincial boundary, which alone could bring back the Hindu districts from Bihar and reduce the Muslims from a majority to minority. But the main reason for the Bengali leaders apathy towards the broader questions of future was 'hat

11. Mansergh and Lumby, *op.cit.*, II Document No. 243: see also *Ibid.*, Nos. 280, 281. Lord Linlithgow brushed aside Sir Sikander's ideas, as these might have brought a Hindu-Muslim reconciliation. Under the Radcliffe award East Punjab got 13 districts comprising the whole of Jullundur and Ambala divisions, the Amritsar district of the Lahore division and certain *tehsils* of the Lahore and Gurdaspur district; Sir Sikander's prediction was vindicated.

all of them were busy fighting amongst themselves in the Legislative Assembly to capture power.

It has been rightly said that the Punjab was impressively different from Bengal. Though for tactical reasons Sir Sikandar was unable to break away from the Muslim League, his position in the Punjab legislature was unassailable. His Unionist Party—composed both of Hindus and Muslims—had captured 96 out of 175 seats in the 1937 elections, and Sir Sikander's Cabinet colleagues gave him unstinted loyalty. Very different was the case of Bengal.

The seats in the Bengal legislature was so distributed under the Act of 1935, that 25 Europeans, that is British merchants of Calcutta, held the balance between the two communities. After the 1937 election the party position in Bengal was as follows: Congress 60, Independent Muslims 41, Muslim League 40, Krishak Praja Party led by Mr. Fazlul Huq 35, Europeans 25, Independent Scheduled Castes 23 and Independent Caste Hindus 14 seats. The most notable victory of the election was won by Mr. Fazlul Huq who defeated Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, leader of the Muslim League in the Patuakhali constituency, and a contributory cause of Sir Nazimuddin's defeat was that he could hardly make himself understood in Bengali; Urdu speeches in the heart of Bucker-gunje (Barisal) District failed to captivate the voters. There were also other reasons for Mr. Huq's victory, and he emerged as the outstanding Muslim leader of Bengal after the election, though in point of seats, his party came second among the Muslims.

Mr. Huq had a distinguished political career having worked under Deshabandhu C. R. Das. He was one of the signatories of the Congress-League pact of 1916 at Lucknow, and in 1918 he was at the same time President of the Muslim League and a General Secretary of the Congress, though later he had moved away from both the organizations. As soon as the election was over, Mr. Huq approached Mr. Sarat C. Bose, the leader of the Congress party, to form a coalition, but at this time the Congress High Command had not decided to form ministry, and were against the Congress joining in any coalition. Mr. Huq then turned towards his defeated rival Sir Nazimuddin (who had another seat) and with the help of Independent Caste Hindus and Scheduled

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Castes formed a Cabinet of ten ministers five of whom were Hindus and five Muslims.

Under similar conditions a Muslim League ministry was formed in Assam. Later when Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose became the Congress President, he helped to install a Congress ministry in Assam under Mr. Bardoli in September 1938. But unfortunately for Bengal, his move came too late, and in the meantime Mr. Huq had joined the Muslim League to retain his position.

When Mr. Huq formed his first Cabinet in March 1937 the political atmosphere in Bengal was unusually quiet. The Government report for 1937 stated: 'Active demonstration of terrorism which had shown a marked decline in 1936, nearly came to an end altogether in 1937.¹² Both the Muslim League and the Praja Party had as their aims the repeal of repressive laws and the release of political prisoners and detenus. The Government assured the Congress that the Andaman prisoners would be released.

Gandhiji twice visited Calcutta (March and November 1937) in this connection; 1115 detenus were released and only 245 remained in detention camps; 136 prisoners were brought back from Andaman during the same period and slowly released. Release of the detenus was completed in 1938, and about 40 political prisoners remained in jail. The revolutionary movement which had burst out in the wake of Bengal Partition of 1905, was petering out. At Chittagong of all places, two ex-prisoners of 'Armoury-raid' case boldly declared at a condolence meeting at the death of a fellow prisoner, that they had come to realize that terrorism was not the road to freedom.¹³

The Government Report also states: 'On the whole the year 1937 was from the communal standpoint remarkably peaceful'.

* * *

A Home Department Report of 1941 stated: 'A significant event is the re-appointment by Jinnah of the Premiers of the

12. Only 3 minor cases were reported, 2 were attempts to murder party members on suspicions of disloyalty and in the third case a goldsmith was robbed at Dacca. *A Brief Summary of Political events in the Presidency of Bengal during the year 1937*; File No. 132/38; Political, 1938.

13. *Ibid.*, para 8, p. 22.

Punjab and Bengal to the League Working Committee, despite their thinly disguised dissent from his Pakistan policy. The claim of the League to represent Muslim opinion of the country and so to be entitled to a more powerful voice in the Government depends entirely on maintaining a united front, and therefore entails keeping the allegiance of the Governments of the two chief Muslim Provinces.¹⁴

This political tactic which could turn a defeat into victory was apparent to Mr. Jinnah after the election of 1937, and Mr. Fazlul Huq was allowed to lead the coalition, that is, he became the Prime Minister on the condition that he joined the League. This he did, along with his party and the Muslim League's seat in the legislature increased to 75.

Trouble soon arose and Mr. Huq was forced to dismiss Mr. Nausher Ali from his Cabinet in June 1938. This created a group of opposition Muslims and Mr. Shamsuddin increased their rank when he resigned in February 1939. On 20th December, 1939, Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar also resigned ostensibly due to his difference on the War Resolution of the Government, but in fact the Muslim League members may be said to have eased him out, and his portfolio of finance was taken over by Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy. No Hindu of importance was left in the Cabinet.

In the meantime the Congress under Mr. Sarat C. Bose had not been inactive. Mr. Huq had for some time turned into a most virulent type of Muslim Leaguer, but he was probably never happy with his principal colleagues, namely Sir Nazimuddin and Mr. Suhrawardy, the former an Urdu-speaking aristocrat and the latter a well-bred man about town with peculiar friends, and uncertain manners.

Congress seems to have made overtures to Mr. Huq in 1937 and 1938, and it was rumoured that even Gandhiji, during his Bengal tour mentioned above, had tried to win him over. In a statement on 20th April, 1938, Mr. Huq admitted that Congress had more than once offered him the Premiership in a coalition

14. From Secretary, Governor-General (Public) to Secretary Home Department *Appreciation for the Dominions*, No. 6 of the 1941 Series, June 21; 1941, Home Department, Political. (Internal) 1941, No. 39/1041 Poll. para. 2.

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Ministry, but if he had accepted he would have 'signed the death-warrant of Islam'. However, in August 1941, Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League Working Committee insisted that the League Premiers should resign from the Defence Council set up by the Government of India. Mr. Huq, after some delay, resigned under protest, and at the same time resigned his membership of the Muslim League Working Committee, protesting against outside interference in Bengal politics. But, by this time Mr. Jinnah had consolidated his position so far as the British Government were concerned, and it was no longer necessary for the Muslim League to have provincial Prime Ministers as its members to demonstrate its status as the authoritative organization of Indian Muslims.

However, Mr. Jinnah had not been unmindful of other opportunities. The Chief Intelligence Officer in his report on the political situation for the first half of November 1940 states:

'Subas Bose pressed for an early opportunity to see his mother who was ill ... Subhas Bose was permitted to go to his house and see his mother ... Secret information now indicates that he had a detailed discussion with Sarat Bose, Amulya Mukherji, Dwijen Bose, Ganesh Bose and other brothers. Sarat Bose told him that Mr. Jinnah had asked for his opinion on the proposed scheme for rallying the non-Congress elements and in combination with the Muslim League, forming coalition Ministries in the Provinces and gaining control at the centre. Subhas Bose is reported to have replied that Gandhi's plan for widening the scope of the Civil Disobedience Movement meant that the masses would ultimately be drawn into the struggle and consequently any such move against the Congress as that proposed would only render their party unpopular.'¹⁵

During this period Mr. Huq had sought Mr. Jinnah's permission to form a coalition Ministry with the Forward Bloc. For the

15. Extracts from C.I.O. Calcutta's Report on the Political situation for the 1st Half of November 1940. *Home Department Political*. 1(i), Section 1940. The value of this and the other intelligence reports quoted in this paper may not be free from doubt; but in view of the fact that the Forward Bloc joined the Ministry when Netaji was in Germany and Sarat C. Bose in jail indicates that these reports are based on fact. Further investigation will undoubtedly bring out the truth, but in the meantime these reports have to be utilised being the only material available.

same report states: 'It is now reported that Mr. Jinnah's reply to the proposal sent to him by Mr. Fazlul Huq regarding the formation of a Coalition Ministry in Bengal by combining with the Bose group has been received. Mr. Jinnah disapproves of the proposal and considers that so long as the Cabinet can maintain its present stable position there is no necessity for any such combination with other group.' Possibly Mr. Jinnah would have entered into a political alliance with the Forward Bloc on an all-India anti-Congress basis.

One may ponder as to whether a chance for preserving the unity of the country was not missed due to what appeared then as the broader consideration of national liberation movement, which does not now appear to have been a success.

In spite of his failure to form a coalition in 1940, Mr. Sarat C. Bose maintained his contact with Mr. Huq.

Mr. Sarat C. Bose was also negotiating with the Congress High Command. An intelligence report of 9th September, 1940, says that Mr. Bose returned from Bombay on 6-9-40. 'He appeared to be disappointed with the result of his negotiations with Sardar Patel, (who) demanded the immediate liquidation of the suspended B.P.C.C., unconditional surrender of Bose brothers by tendering an unqualified apology and the resignation of Jnan Majumdar who should seek re-election through the new B.P.C.C. after securing Parliamentary subcommittee's nomination. In addition to this, Pratul Ganguly, Hema Praba Majumdar and others who have sponsored and supported the candidature of Jnan Majumdar will also have to tender an apology ...'¹⁶

16. 4/13/40, *Poll, Home Poll. (Internal)*. It is only fair to add that when Sardar met Mr. Sarat C. Bose again in 1945, he burst into tears as he embraced the latter, and Sardar was not an emotional man. As for Netaji, Sardar completely changed his attitude after Netaji had left India. Mr. K. M. Munshi used to tell me that it became 'impossible to discuss with Sardar any proposal for negotiations with the Government on any terms; Sardar's invariable reply to all arguments being 'Subhas a gya' (Subhas is about to come) Mr. Munshi was of the opinion that the failure of the Cripps Mission was partly due to the stand taken by Sardar, who by that time had convinced Gandhiji that nothing should be done which could impede Netaji's activities abroad.

Apparently Mr. Sarat C. Bose had conducted negotiations both with Mr. Jinnah and Sardar Patel while he visited Bombay, during the first week of September. It is impossible to say whether Sardar Patel's vindictive attitude impelled Mr. Bose to lend a willing ear to Mr. Jinnah's overtures, or whether Sardar's attitude was formed by his knowledge that Mr. Bose was having secret *pourparlers* with Mr. Jinnah.

Whatever may have been the cause, the failure of Mr. Bose to arrive at an understanding with Mr. Jinnah must be reckoned as unfortunate. However, he did not give up his attempt and went on with his negotiations till he was arrested on 11th December, 1941, under the Defence of India Rules.

Mr. Sarat C. Bose's arrest was decided after a voluminous correspondence between the Home Member, Governor of Bengal, Governor-General, and the Secretary of State. The final charges against him appears to have been (1) his Japanese contacts and (2) the certainty of his inclusion as a minister in the pending ministerial changes in Bengal.¹⁷ The matter seems to have been clinched after the Home Member received a telegram from Bengal on 8th December, 1941, advising that Mr. Bose would insist on Home Portfolio in the Huq Ministry.¹⁸

We have printed in Appendix I a letter dated, 14th December, 1944, from Sir Nazimuddin to Mr. Jinnah. This letter shows the dominant role played by the Governor and the European bloc in Ministry-making in Bengal. Communal riots had become nearly endemic in Bengal, particularly at Dacca, since August, 1940, and the Muslim League had become almost an anathema to the Hindus, yet the Governor was trying his best to break the coalition and instal a Muslim League Ministry. As Sir Nazimuddin writes: 'The break with Mr. Fazlul Huq took place with practically the tacit approval of H(is) E(xcellency), and we were given to understand that when the Coalition Party elected the new Leader he would be sent for.'

17. Letter dated 4 December 1941 from Sir Richard Tottenham to Secretary (Public) to the Governor-General, 94/26/Poll.(I) 1941. Home Department, Poll (I) Sec. For Mr. Bose's version of his nature of Japanese contact see Appendix II.

18. Home Department file mentioned in note 17.

Unfortunately for Sir Nazimuddin the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbour on 7th December, 1941, the very day on which the Governor accepted Mr. Huq's resignation submitted on 1st December, and immediately the Governor asked Sir Nazimuddin to patch up his differences with Mr. Huq. This however, was not possible, one of the reasons being that Mr. Huq had formed the Progressive Coalition Party under his leadership on 3rd December, 1941, which consisted of members drawn from Muslim League dissidents, Congress (Forward Bloc), Krishak Praja Party, Hindu Mahasabha, Nationalists (Hindus), Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Labour. Under the circumstances then prevailing this was possibly the most representative coalition that could be formed.

Sir Nazimuddin also writes: 'The arrest of Mr. Sarat Bose came as a surprise to everyone, excepting myself'. Apparently he had prior information about the impending arrest from the highest sources, which could only be the Governor, and it is possible that he had advised Mr. Bose's arrest in order to break the Progressive Coalition Party. However he laments: '...but neither it (the arrest of Mr. Bose) has improved our position nor has it in any way, affected the subversive elements in the Government of Bengal. Mr. Sarat Bose and his followers know that they have, at last, got the Government of Bengal in their hands and would fully exert every nerve to keep their grip on it.'

A contemporary Government report described the provincial affairs as follows: 'Two of the three Provincial Premiers who professed allegiance to the Muslim League have (with their colleagues) lately resigned. In Assam, where the Premier could no longer command a majority, a new ministry has not yet been formed. In Bengal differences between the Premier, Mr. Fazlul Huq, and his Muslim League colleagues have been much aggravated by Mr. Jinnah's attempt to repress the Premier's independence of action; and in the outcome the League Ministers have passed into opposition while Mr. Fazlul Huq (now finally excommunicated from the League) has formed a coalition Ministry in which most of the other elements in the Assembly are represented. Thus he retains office, though the Ministry which he has led since April 1937 has fallen to pieces. The Muslim League, and Mr. Jinnah's leadership of it have certainly lost credit by these

events.¹⁹ The British authorities and officials tried their utmost to restore Mr. Jinnah's credit.

On 28th March, 1942, Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy was writing to Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India: 'I have had clear indication both from Dow in Sind and from Bengal of the growing reluctance of the Ministers to put their heart into the war effort or take responsibility for unpleasant decisions ... While in Bengal the Civil Defence Minister (Mr. Santosh Kumar Basu) is achieving good results, some of the Ministry seem to have put about the ingenious theory that the Council of Ministers is distinct from the Government of Bengal—a theory which the Chief Minister puts into practice by agreeing departmentally to the issue of orders necessitated under direction from the Centre, and then coming back with a memorandum from the "Council of Ministers" protesting against the policy. In brief the idea appears to be to hang on to the sweets of office without accepting its responsibilities. I feel I ought to let you know of this tendency because I have the strong impression that the situation is deteriorating and that a situation might develop in which Herbert (Sir John, Governor of Bengal) ought to force the issue even to the point of Fazlul Huq's resignation ...'²⁰

It is apparent that a difficult situation had been created by the operation of Section 126A of the Government of India Act (Amendment Act) 1939, which had received the Royal Assent on 1st September, 1939. This Act, which was claimed to be a war measure, authorised the Central Government, during an emergency, to give directions to the Provinces as to the way in which their executive authority was to be exercised, and empowered the Centre to make laws regarding a provincial subject by which executive

19. Appreciation for The Dominions, No. 12 of the 1941 Series, December 17, 1941, Home Department Political (Internal) No. 39/10/41/Poll. By the middle of August 1942, Sir Mohammad Saadullah managed to form another Ministry with European support on condition that 'the schemes for supply will be administered by competent commercial firm; Mansergh and Lumby, *op.cit.*, II, Document No. 568.

20. Mansergh and Lumby, *op.cit.*, I Document No. 426. The Prime Minister of Sind, Mr. Allah Bakhsh was dismissed by the Governor on October 10, 1942 ostensibly for renouncing his titles of Khan Bahadur and O.B.E. which, he said were 'tokens of British Imperialism'.

authority was conferred upon the Centre or its officers. In practice, the Central officers were passing orders to the Provincial officers and ministers were practically reduced to rubber stamps. The operation of Section 126A must have been very humiliating to the ministers, particularly to Mr. Fazlul Huq, who had acted as Prime Minister before the obnoxious amending Act was passed. In any case, it was impossible for the Ministry to assume responsibility for policies and acts dictated from the Centre. Hence, however, irritating their behaviour may have appeared to the Viceroy it seems to have been the only possible solution of the problem.

The real trouble, however, was that the Governor was not quite sure of Mr. Fazlul Huq's attitude towards the Congress, which was about to begin its movement under Gandhiji. In a letter to Mr. Amery written on the day the August Movement started, Lord Linlithgow wrote: 'Herbert is not very certain of the attitude of Huq who under Shyama Prasad Mookerji's influence shows signs of wobbling with the result that Bengal Government may be reluctant to take necessary action.'²¹

One of the main pillars of the new coalition was Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the leader of the Hindu Mahasabha. Intelligence report of the Home Department records that during this period communal tension was increasing the popularity of the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal led by its energetic leader, Dr. Mukherjee, and he was gaining at the expense of the Congress, which was hard put to explain its inactive policy regarding the communal problem even in the face of rising onslaught by the Muslim League.

Dr. Mukherjee was impelled by the deteriorating political situation to arrive at a settlement with Mr. Jinnah. They apparently had a friendly talk, and then Dr. Mukherjee saw the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, on 9th September, 1942. Lord Linlithgow told Dr. Mukherjee that 'he (Dr. Mukherjee) had ruined his chances of acting as a mediator by the insistence laid on prior repudiation of Pakistan by His Majesty's Government as a condition of any settlement.' Lord Linlithgow also 'warned' Dr. Mukherjee that 'if he was thinking of a Government based essentially on the Maha-

21. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Document No. 461, para 2, see also Documents Nos. 309, para 3, and 313.

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sabha, with odd sections of Muslims, such as those represented by Fazlul Huq and other oddments, he could hardly hope for such success if Congress were out in opposition and the Muslim League (and probably the Sikhs also) were also in opposition'.²²

That is, the Viceroy made it clear to Dr. Mukherjee that the British authorities were not prepared to take any notice of a political leader who did not enjoy the support of the Congress and the Muslim League (and of the Sikhs also), and indirectly, accept Pakistan at least by implication, though in a letter written to Mr. Amery only four days before his interview with Dr. Mukherjee, Lord Linlithgow had stated: 'The Hindus have made the mistake of taking Jinnah seriously about Pakistan, and as a result they have given substance to a shadow.'²³ But British politicians and administrators since Lord Clive have not been above guile when dealing with Indian leaders.

Lord Linlithgow may have cautioned Mr. Jinnah about Dr. Mukherjee's move; in any case on 14th September, 1943, that is four days after Dr. Mukherjee's interview with the Viceroy, Mr. Jinnah called a Press Conference in course of which he declared the Hindu Mahasabha was out to establish a Hindu Raj in which Mussalmans will be treated as Jews.²⁴ This statement strengthened the Viceroy in his stand, and in his letter to Mr. Amery next day (14th September, 1942) he referred to it and concluded: "The individuals he mentions as supporting the stand taken by the Hindu Mahasabha are all respectable and some of them important;

22. Mansergh and Lumby, *op.cit.*, II, Document No. 722, paras 2 and 4, see also Nos. 741 and 744 para 2. Mr. K. M. Munshi in his *Pilgrimage to Freedom*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1967, p. 84-6 has given a slightly different account. Actually I found the document from his papers which he identified as Dr. Mukherji's proposals. But I was not satisfied that it was Dr. Mukherji's note and wrote the foot-note on p. 84. The letter to Rajaji was also written at my request. The publication of the letter from Lord Linlithgow to Mr. Amery confirms me in my view that the note which Mr. Munshi said was Dr. Mukherji's was actually Raja Maheswar Dayal's. That Mr. Munshi was in Dr. Mukherji's confidence is stated by Lord Linlithgow also, *ibid.*, II Document No. 741.

23. Mansergh and Lumby *op.cit.*, II, Document No. 701, para 12. In this letter Lord Linlithgow expressed himself against giving any concession to Sikh demand.

24. *Ibid.*, II Document No. 740, p. 958.

but there is nothing behind them that matters. Equally, so far as Muslims are concerned, Jinnah is the only person that matters'.²⁵ Lord Linlithgow, however, admitted in the same letter that Dr. Mukherjee had 'secured the support of Rajagopalachari, Jayakar, Munshi, Tara Singh, Maharaj Singh, and also has the support of the Premier of Sind, and the President of the Momin Conference.' As Dr. Mukherjee had the full support and co-operation of Mr. Fazlul Huq, he actually represented at this time, the non-Congress Hindus, non-League Muslims (including premiers of two provinces), Sikhs and Indian Christians; yet he was rebuffed by the Viceroy who was out to build up Mr. Jinnah.²⁶

Bengal at this time had three Hindu leaders; of them Netaji was out of the country; we have seen his brother Mr. Sarat C. Bose had tried his utmost to come to an understanding with the Muslims, both League and non-League. Even after his arrest, which seems to have been intended to prevent a coalition between his party and non-League Muslims, his followers joined the Ministry, and even the Viceroy admitted that at least one of them namely Mr. Santosh Kumar Basu 'the Civil Defence Minister was achieving good results'.²⁷ Thus they were trying their best to achieve success for their coalition Ministry under Mr. Fazlul Huq, even though their Party leader was rotting in jail. In Appendix II we have given an account of an interview of Mr. Sarat C. Bose with Mr. Santosh K. Basu and the Nawab of Dacca—who by all accounts was a leader of Muslim opinion—at the Trichi Jail, which will show the affectionate regard which the Nawab had for Mr. Sarat C. Bose.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee is now known as a communal leader of the Hindus, and his efforts to establish harmonious relation and political understanding between the Hindus and Muslims particularly of Bengal, have been forgotten. It seems to have been forgotten also, that the Muslim League Leaders, Bengalis and non-Bengalis alike, set their face adamantly against any understanding with the Hindus, unless their demand for Pakistan was

25. *Ibid.*, II Document No. 741.

26. For an explanation of British attitude see my paper referred to in note 3.

27. Mansergh and Lumby, *op.cit.*, I, Document No. 426.

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conceded; and they were being encouraged to remain adamant by their British patrons.

As we have seen from Sir Nazimuddin's letter to Mr. Jinnah (Appendix I), the Governor allowed the formation of non-League Coalition Ministry due to the situation created by the entry of Japan into the war. Even so, he had hoped that the Forward Bloc would not join or support the Ministry since their leader had been arrested. But his expectations of a short-lived Ministry proved futile, and he had to take recourse to other measures to get rid of it and instal a League Ministry. The Huq Ministry's refusal to toe the line chalked out by the Central Government and Mr. Jinnah brought about its downfall.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the Minister for Finance, was the first to go. He resigned on 16th November, 1942, and in his letter of resignation addressed to the Governor stated :

'Let me refer briefly to the general political situation in the country ... I should record here the extraordinary manner in which you acted when you received information of policy as determined by the Government of India regarding the threatened Congress movement. When the letter from the Government of India came to the Chief Secretary, you showed it to and discussed it with the Chief Minister who rightly suggested that the policy enunciated by the Government of India on so important a subject should be fully discussed by Cabinet. You deliberately rejected this advice and even asked the Chief Minister to keep back the contents of the letter from his colleagues, although some permanent officials saw it and recorded their plans for giving effect to the directions. You decided that the Cabinet would consider the letter only after information had been received from the Government of India that effect had actually been given to the policy formulated by it, following the arrest of the Congress leaders. Consultation at this stage was utterly useless as it gave no opportunity to Cabinet to record its views and communicate them for the effective consideration of the Government of India.

'When on August 9, after the arrest of the Congress leaders at Bombay, you called us together and asked us either to accept the policy or to resign, I pointed out to you that your action was extraordinary and brought Provincial autonomy to a state of

ridicule. You expected Ministers to stand by you on the basis of collective responsibility but declined to trust them and consult them on such a vital matter except at the very last moment when consultation was indeed fruitless.

'I regret to say that from the very beginning of our association with you, you have failed to rise to that impartial height of a Provincial Governor.... You have all along permitted yourself to be guided by a section of permanent officials—loyal diehards according to you; short-sighted and reactionary, according to us—resulting in the establishment of a Government within a Government which has proved disastrous to the interest of the province.

'....you showed no sympathy whenever proposals for the recognition of the people's rights in various fields of activity were made. They were turned down by you because of deep-rooted distrust and suspicion. Our proposal for raising a Bengal Army was not acceptable to you for reasons which would not even bear scrutiny.... The scheme for popularizing the Home Guard was rejected by you in spite of unanimous advice of all the Ministers, simply (because) you and your officials were afraid of trusting the people. You have systematically resisted the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries and the expansion of Cabinet, just to embarrass the Ministry.... In matters relating to the Denial Policy you failed to realize the untold suffering into which thousands of people would be thrown and discontent that was bound to follow; and only after a good deal of effort could that policy be only slightly modified. We do not yet know what plans have been kept ready for destruction of plants, machinery and other properties in case of enemy invasion. Even in matters relating to supply of food and control of supply you have interfered with Ministerial action and have rendered our task extremely embarrassing. You have discouraged the growth of collective responsibility among Ministers while taking momentous decisions on vital issues. Ministerial advice has been brushed aside in regard to selection and posting of officers, while your unabashed softness for the present Opposition Party is in marked contrast to the treatment we used to receive in a similar capacity when the last Ministry was in office. Even with regard to a simple question like prorogation of the last session of the Assembly, you have declined to accept our advice. Indeed I did not even receive a reply from you to my letter written in

early October, pointing out how the Province had to incur wasteful and avoidable expenditure due to your decision not to prorogue the Assembly, simply to harass the Ministry.... You and some of your officers will commit Government to policies and acts which Ministers do not approve of and afterwards you expect them to stand up as obedient persons fully justifying the results of your mistaken policy....

"The manner in which collective fines have been imposed by Government throughout the Province deserves severe condemnation. The scheme of imposition of collective fines on Hindus alone, irrespective of their guilt, has been an all-India feature and is a British revival of the ancient policy of *jiziya* for which Aurangzeb made himself famous. In Bengal the Chief Minister has been averse to the imposition of such fines and tried again and again to lay down certain principles which were unimpeachable from the point of view of elementary justice. You have interfered with the Chief Minister's decision and have prevented him from giving effect to these directions. Amounts have been imposed in many cases without any regard to the total damage caused or to the part played by the inhabitants concerned... Fines have been imposed in many cases without the Chief Minister knowing what was being done. Only recently it was suggested by the Chief Minister that the realization might be delayed by a fortnight and the entire policy considered at a Cabinet meeting. Your answer to this request, which was made on behalf of us all, was in full conformity with the traditions which you had already established. You had no objection to a Cabinet meeting being held. But you indicated beforehand with sufficient clearness, but with unbecoming impropriety and discourtesy to Ministers, that you would in any case pass order in exercise of your individual judgment for the immediate collection of the fine."²⁸

We have given lengthy extracts from Dr. Mukherjee's letter for it is the only available evidence on the activities of the Governor and his relation with the coalition Ministry. It reveals the attempt of the white bureaucracy to get rid of a popular

28. Quoted in J. S. Sharma: *India's Struggle for Freedom*, S. Chand, Delhi, 1962, pp. 582-85.

ministry so that the Muslim League might be restored to office and Mr. Jinnah's hands strengthened. The white officials had by this time become corrupt, and was out to make money in collusion with some non-Bengali commercial firms which were entrusted to procure food; the Governor Sir John Herbert was their mouthpiece.

On 24th March, 1943, the Muslim League moved a cut motion to the Budget in the Bengal Assembly, but it was rejected by 116 votes to 86. Three days later, on March 27, the League moved a resolution of no-confidence, which also failed but by a narrower majority: 109 votes to 99. In the best style of a Nazi *Gauleiter* the Governor then summoned Mr. Huq to the Government House and forced him to sign a letter of resignation which had already been typed. Mr. Huq was told that his fault was that in August 1942 he had failed to institute an enquiry into a shooting incident at Dacca, when asked by the Governor to do so.

Sir Nazimuddin could not rally enough support for a Muslim League Ministry, so the Governor took up the administration of the Province under Section 93 to give Sir Nazimuddin the time he needed to win over sufficient support. Constitutional Government was restored on April 24, by which time Sir Nazimuddin had been able to collect sufficient non-descript elements to command a majority in the Assembly. In July the opposition led by Mr. Huq forced a motion over the Ministry's culpable mishandling of the food situation, but now the European Bloc of 25 members came to the rescue of the Muslim League Ministry.

In October 1943 Lord Wavell replaced Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy. He was appalled by the Bengal famine, and on 6th January, 1944 wrote to Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State:

'We must not let constitutional technicalities obscure realities of situation. Bengal famine of 1943 and its aftermath of misery and disease are grave national disaster with death roll which will never be known but may amount to one million or more. If we believe that this disaster which was largely due to ministerial incompetence may be repeated perhaps on an even larger scale in 1944 and that the remedy is direct administration by the Governor then we must find means to apply the remedy whatever the constitutional position may be. I admit the force of what you say about provincial autonomy, but there must be limits to the price we pay for preserving it...

'Your view is that Section 93 can be employed only when administration becomes constitutionally impossible and not as a remedy for inefficiency. But surely you cannot push this argument to the point of sacrificing another million lives on the ground that they are being sacrificed in a strictly constitutional manner...'²⁹

However, on various ingenious pleas, the Secretary of State declined to interfere and the horrible famine continued to take its toll of human life. The Muslim League Ministry unperturbed by the misery of its creation continued in office till they were defeated by an adverse vote in the legislature on 28th March, 1945.

During the two years of its existence, the Muslim League Ministry had managed to change completely the communal atmosphere of Bengal. Communal riots become almost part of political life, but what was even worse, Muslim youth became fanatic protagonists of Pakistan of their fervid imagination, which indeed included not only the whole of Bengal but Assam also.

After the League Ministry in Bengal was voted out of office on 28 March, 1945, the Governor took up the administration of the Province under Section 93. Various attempts to form a Ministry failed mainly due to the tactics adopted by the Muslim League, which refused to form a coalition with any party unless their Pakistan demand was conceded. The Muslim League also deliberately embittered the already bad communal situation.

Fresh elections were held in December 1945, but the results were declared next January. In Bengal Assembly of 250 members, the Muslim League won 113 out of the total of 119 Muslim seats, and the Congress obtained 87. Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, who now led the Muslim League in the Assembly, made half-hearted attempts to induce the Congress to join him in a coalition, but ultimately formed a League Ministry, which included a few independent elements. Mr. Fazlul Huq was totally eliminated from power, though he too had been returned and ultimately managed to be elected to the Constituent Assembly.

At this point the politics of Bengal becomes a part of all-India politics, and it is no longer necessary for our present purpose to

29. Telegram XX, from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated 6 January 1944 (1230) IMMEDIATE, 389-6; Menon Papers.

go into either. It is however, instructive to study the reactions and responses of two Congress leaders to the communal situation.

Towards the end of August 1945, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad approached Gandhiji with a plan for communal settlement. The main features of this plan was fully autonomous provinces with minimum necessary power for the centre, and the provinces were to have the right to secede. Joint electorates were provided for both at the Centre and the provinces, 'with reservation and such differential franchise as might be needed to make the electorate reflect the strength of population of the communities. There must be parity of Hindus and Muslims in the central legislature and the central executive till such time as communal suspicion disappeared and parties were formed on economic and political lines. There should also be a convention by which the head of the India federation would in the initial period be Hindu and Muslim by turn.'³⁰

In a letter to Sir Stafford Cripps dated 27th January 1946, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

The British Government has to decide once for all its policy in regard to this matter. It can no longer sit on the hedge. It cannot force Pakistan on India, in the form demanded by Jinnah, for that certainly will lead to Civil war. Jinnah's demand includes Assam, Delhi, the whole of the Punjab, and Bengal, the N-W.F. Province, Sind, (and) Baluchistan. By no stretch of imagination can Assam, Delhi and large parts of Punjab and Bengal which have a non-Muslim majority, be included in Pakistan. Probably even in these elections the N-W.F.P. will declare against the League. Even if the Muslims as a whole support the League and Pakistan, that can only mean a division of both Punjab and Bengal. Jinnah has indignantly rejected this. What then? Compulsion of other areas to join Pakistan? That is inconceivable and impossible. Thus the crux of the Pakistan issue is this: a Pakistan consisting of only part of Punjab and part of Bengal, or no separation at all.'³¹

30. V. P. Menon: *The Transfer of Power in India*, Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1957, p. 221. Mr. Menon got this information from an intercepted letter from Maulana Azad to Gandhiji in which the scheme was presented; a copy of Maulana Azad's letter was sent to the Secretary of State; the Viceroy had of course seen it. I got this information from Mr. Menon.

31. Menon Papers.

So far as we have been able to find out, Maulana Azad's scheme was never discussed by other Congress leaders, from which it appears that Gandhiji did not favour this scheme. Gandhiji was also against partition of the Punjab and Bengal, for he was at this time trying his best to maintain the country's unity.

Meanwhile, inspired by Sir Nazimuddin and directed by the Prime Minister of Bengal, Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, the Muslim League started a massive communal riot on 16 August 1946, which even the British Press called 'The Great Calcutta Killing'. According to the Viceroy, by 28 August 1946, 4400 people were dead, 16000 injured and 100,000 rendered homeless;³² unofficial figures were much higher.

By the time the Hindus of Calcutta succeeded in organizing themselves, riot broke out in Noakhali (October 10, 1946). Acharya Kripalani, then the President of the Congress came to Bengal to find out the truth about Noakhali, as no news was available. He met the Governor at Chittagong and writes about this meeting:

'When we met the Governor, he appeared to be quite unconcerned and at ease. The Chief Minister also happened to be there. The Governor said that the Chief Minister had reported to him that everything was under control and peace and order had been restored. When we talked of kidnapping of Hindu women by the Muslims, his laconic reply was that that was inevitable, as the Hindu women there were more handsome than Muslim women. I felt like hitting him....³³ This attitude of extreme indifference to the fate of the Hindus, and an equally intense eagerness to pander to the misdeeds of the Muslims characterized the Britishers.

32. Cypher Telegram O.T.P. Top Secret from Viceroy to Secretary of State No. 1804-S dated the 28 August 1946, (1715) MOST IMMEDIATE, SUPERINTENDENT, SERIES: Menon Papers.

33. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1970, pp. 255-56. At this time Sir Frederic Burrows was the Governor of Bengal. He had the unique distinction of being the only 'Labour' Governor of British India. He had served as a parcel clerk at a small station in Herefordshire, and had been President of the National Union of Railwaymen and a member of the Labour Party Executive. He was appointed by Mr. Attlee, who had a high opinion about him. C. R. Attlee: *As It Happened*. William Heinemann, London, 1954, p. 183.

The Hindus in Naokhali received no protection from any quarter. Ultimately Gandhiji went there to lend them his moral support and focus the attention of the world to the sufferings of the Hindus there.

Describing the reaction of the Congress, her President Acharya Kripalani writes: 'The long period of negotiations marked by intrigues, communal rioting and the bringing in of the League into the Central Cabinet had created conditions in which nobody knew where the real authority lay

'This had made Congress leaders reluctantly realise that there was no possibility of peace between the Hindus and Muslims in the foreseeable future and some kind of division of the country, they held, had become necessary. But at the time they were thinking in terms of administrative division of certain areas. However, the British bureaucracy, it would appear, was determined to satisfy Jinnah and the League about their demand for Pakistan as a separate sovereign state. This was clear from the announcement made by Attlee on February 20...'³⁴

The Congress Working Committee considered the British Prime Minister's offer on 6th March 1947. Acharya Kripalani writes of this meeting: 'The members felt that Pakistan which the Muslim League was insisting upon and which had the backing of the British Government was inevitable. If India was divided, the division of the Punjab and Bengal should be the necessary corollary. It was therefore as a lesser evil that they suggested the administrative division of the Punjab. Asked by the Press whether the same principle would apply to Bengal, I said "Naturally so."'³⁵

Gandhiji reacted sharply against Acharya Kripalani's statement to the Press, and demanded an explanation. But ultimately he had to accept the facts of political life.

34. Acharya Kripalani, *op.cit.*, p. 273.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 279. The resolution was passed on 8 March and stated that the situation 'would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part.' It is well known that this was the only major decision taken by the Congress in Gandhiji's absence, for which Acharya Kripalani has given an explanation.

Still there was, no change in the attitude of the Muslim leaders of Bengal. Probably they felt confident that with British support, they would be able to get whole of Bengal, and Assam in Pakistan. They were therefore dazed by the statement of 3rd June 1947 which provided for partition of Bengal and the Punjab. The Hindus of East Bengal were dismayed; but there was relief in West Bengal; sporadic riots were still going on in Calcutta.

As stated earlier, Mr. V. P. Menon's plan for transfer of power to two Dominions and partition of the Punjab and Bengal was accepted in principle by the middle of May 1947. As a result, as Mr. Pyarelal put it, 'Chickens of destiny had come to roost in Shaheed Suhrawardy's Bengal.'³⁶

As early as 19th March 1947, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had demanded division of Bengal even in an undivided India. But Muslim leaders paid no heed to him. Now the situation was different, and faced with the prospect of losing Calcutta, the jute mills, coal belt and the iron industry, Mr. Suhrawardy and his Muslim League colleagues turned to the Congress leaders, and particularly to Gandhiji, whose dislike of partition was well known, to preserve the unity of Bengal.

Dr. B. C. Roy and Mr. Kiran Sankar Ray saw Gandhiji at Delhi, and at his advice Mr. K. S. Roy met the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten. Lord Mountbatten's advice was that if the Muslim League offered joint electorate and the constitution of a composite Cabinet and recruitment in the services upon a 50 : 50 basis, Bengal Congress should accept the offer even if it meant setting up a sovereign State of Bengal.³⁷ Nothing seems to have come out of this move; apparently the Muslim League leaders refused to accept these terms.

Mr. Sarat C. Bose then took up the cause of a Sovereign United Bengal. He saw Gandhiji several times in this connection and more than once took Mr. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashem, the Secretary of the Bengal Muslim League to Gandhiji. Gandhiji was happy to learn from Mr. Hashem that his case for a united Bengal was on the grounds of 'common language, common culture

36. Pyarelal: *Mahatma Gandhi; The Last Phase*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1958, Vol. II, p. 177.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

and common history that united the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal alike. Whether Hindu or Muslim, Bengali was a Bengali; and hated the rule of Pakistanis from over 1000 miles away.'

Gandhiji then asked Mr. Hashem whether they would object to join Pakistan, if instead of incorporation, Pakistan invited them to enter into a 'voluntary federation for the propagation of Islamic culture and religion'. Mr. Hashem kept quiet. Gandhiji then said that since Bengal's common culture as embodied in Tagore had its roots in the Upanishads, which was the common heritage not only of Bengal but of the whole of India, 'would sovereign Bengal contemplate entering into a "voluntary association" with the rest of India.' Again Mr. Hashem failed to answer.

By this time Mr. Suhrawardy practically renounced the two nation theory at a Press interview, while at another he agreed that Sovereign Bengal would enter into any arrangement with the Indian Union. But he had no prestige left, at least with the Hindus, and his assurances and pledges were dismissed as lightly as they were made. He requested Gandhiji to help him by inducing the Hindus not to insist on partitioning Bengal, but totally ignored Gandhiji's advice to make an all out effort to win the confidence of the Hindus.

Later in May a conference was held in Mr. Sarat C. Bose's house which was attended by Mr. Suhrawardy, Fazlur Rahaman (Dacca) Mohammed Ali (Bogra), Abdul Hashem (Secretary Bengal Muslim League on leave), Abdul Malek (Labour) Kiran Sankar Ray and Satya Rajan Bakshi. This meeting arrived at a tentative agreement which Mr. Bose and Mr. Hashem signed for purposes of identification, and Mr. Bose sent a copy of the agreement to Gandhiji, who was then at Patna (23rd May 1947).

Even when Gandhiji had met the Muslim leaders and Mr. Bose at Calcutta or Sodepur, he had suggested that instead of 'mutual consent every major decision would have to be taken by two-thirds majority of each community.' But this point was not found in the 'tentative agreement' accepted by Mr. Sarat C. Bose. Hence Gandhiji wrote to him:

'There is nothing in the draft stipulating that nothing will be done by mere majority. Every act of Government must carry with it the co-operation of at least two-thirds of the Hindu mino-

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rity in the executive and the legislature. There should be an admission that Bengal has common culture and common mother-tongue Bengali. Make sure that the Central Muslim League approves of the proposal notwithstanding reports to the contrary. If your presence is necessary in Delhi I shall telephone or telegraph. I propose to discuss the draft with the Working Committee.'³⁸

Mr. Sarat C. Bose failed to get satisfaction from Mr. Suhrawardy on the points raised by Gandhiji. Still he met Gandhiji at Delhi on June 6th 1947, and discussed with him his plan of 'United Bengal' though by that time both Congress and the League had accepted partition under June 3 plan. On 8th June 1947, Gandhiji wrote to Mr. Sarat C. Bose:

'I have gone through your draft. I have now discussed the scheme roughly with Pandit Nehru and the Sardar. Both of them are dead against the proposal and they are of opinion that it is merely a trick for dividing Hindu and Scheduled Caste leaders. With them it is not merely a suspicion but almost a conviction.'³⁹

Mr. Sarat C. Bose, however, did not give up his attempt. He had met Mr. Jinnah at Delhi, and on June 9th wrote to him from Calcutta to instruct the Muslim members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly to vote against Pakistan.⁴⁰ But, as Mr. Pyarelal has said, 'at the stage, this was like looking for last year's eggs in this year's nests.'

APPENDIX I

Home Department Political (Internal) Section 1941 No. 232/41 Pol.

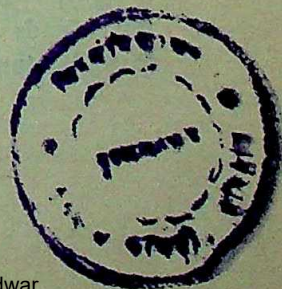
Copy of a letter dated 14-12-41, from Sir Nazimuddin, Calcutta to Mr. M. A. Jinnah, Bombay.

I have been so busy during the last fortnight that I have not been able to write to you and give you detailed information. I hope Hassan kept you posted with all the news. I am glad to

38. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

40. For the text of this letter, see *ibid.*, p. 190.



find that you have nominated Hassan on the Working Committee. I would like to have had Shaheed there, specially as he feels that he has a prior claim to any one of us. But, under the present circumstances, your decision is a very wise one. We are hopelessly short of funds and our future success depends on our ability to organise which cannot be done without money. Both the Ispahani Brothers are very keen and genuine Leaguers and our main and perhaps, the only hope. Mirza Ahmed Ispahani has undertaken to find about twenty-five to thirty thousand rupees for organising the Muslim League in Bengal. He expects to raise this sum from the mercantile community in Calcutta, but I am afraid, in the end he may have to meet practically the whole of it.

Now let me tell you of what happened here—Upto a point everything went according to my plan; that is to say H.E. and the European Group were supporting us and when it was announced (that) Messrs Sarat Bose, Shyama Prashad Mookerjee and others had accepted Mr. Fazlul Huq as leader, H.E. decided that break was inevitable and we were given to understand that we would be called. The only difficulty was the H.E. has so committed himself that he was not prepared to prorogue the Assembly and the Speaker was also not prepared to adjourn the House, *sine die*. The latter's attitude was inexplicable and as a Muslim Leaguer he disappointed us very much. The break with Mr. Fazlul Huq took place with practically the tacit approval of H.E. and we were given to understand that when the Coalition Party elected the new Leader he would be sent for. We then decided to form the Muslim League Legislature Party. We had about 55 to 60 signatures and at the meeting of the Coalition Party, which was held on the same day 72 members were present and they unanimously passed a vote of no-confidence on Mr. Fazlul Huq. But suddenly H.E.'s attitude changed and we later came to learn that the non-official Europeans also adopted that what may be called a hostile attitude towards us, and it is my personal opinion that the attitude of the non-official Europeans influenced H.E. also. I had long and heated discussion with H.E. and once, after a protracted argument when H.E. could not find any reply to my claim to be sent for, he promised to do so the next day, provided I was prepared to face the legislature in seven days' time. He asked me to consult my friends and come back the next day. I was definitely given to understand that if I agreed to meet a vote of no-confidence

immediately, he would give me the first chance. Next morning I went back with the information that I had received very good response and there was every chance of my forming a stable Ministry and I was prepared to face the legislature according to H.E.'s wishes. H.E. told me that the war news was very bad; that the Japs had the command of the sea and were able to land troops in Malaya and therefore he wanted to have a War Cabinet; that Mr. Fazlul Huq and I should agree to work together. He insisted on our meeting together. We met and I reported to you over the telephone the gist of the conversation we had. He had been toying with the idea of a War Cabinet and although I pointed out to him that it was neither a practicable nor a feasible proposition, yet throughout the day he tried his best to have a War Cabinet. Mr. Fazlul Huq, under the guidance of Mr. Sarat Bose and Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, refused to work under Sir Azizul Haque and H.E. therefore, had to drop the idea. After that he definitely made up his mind to send for Mr. Fazlul Huq. The main consideration which led H.E. to this decision was the fact that if he asked me to form the Ministry his position with the Hindus would be mud. I told him that the Muslims were receiving the same treatment which they got at the time of cancelling the Partition of Bengal, which H.E. himself had denounced. I also told him many home-truths and pointed out that he was handing over the Government to the 5th columnists and to persons whom he knew definitely to be anti-British and in favour of Hitler and Japan. But nothing would shake him from the fear of what the Hindu Press would say and thus, once again, the Mussalmans of Bengal have been let down by the Governor and the non-official Europeans.

The arrest of Mr. Sarat Bose came as a big surprise to everyone, excepting myself, but neither it has improved our position nor has it in any way affected the influence of the subversive elements on the Government of Bengal. Mr. Sarat Bose and his followers know that they have, at last, got the Government of Bengal in their hands and would fully exert every nerve to keep their grip on it. And they have got it at a time when they wanted it most, with Subhas Bose in Germany and Japan knocking at the doors of Burma. It is a chance of a life-time for the terrorists in Bengal. Akbar Allahabadi's verse appears to have been written for an occasion like this.

We have now got about 50 Muslims in the opposition. There may be addition in our rank after the Ministry is completely formed, when the disappointed ones will come to us, or we may be reduced to 40. But, Inshallah, we will not go below 40 and they will be the solid ones. The public is whole-heartedly with us. There is great indignation at the treachery of Mr. Fazlul Huq and the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca and the poor Muslim officers are heart-broken and frightened. The student community is highly excited and solidly behind us. An attempt is being made to stop all demonstrations and public meetings on the ground of war emergency. I consider this absolutely unjustifiable, as we are not going to say anything against war; we are not against war efforts, and as long as there is a legislature working, there can be no possible ground for preventing the discussion of matters that are going to come up before the legislature, particularly expression of public opinion on the character of the Ministry. There is going to be a public meeting today and I am told that the Commissioner of Police may make an attempt to stop it. The Calcutta public are determined to hold the meeting. We are going to attend in full force and it is possible that we may be arrested. But it is, in my opinion, a life and death question for the Muslims of Bengal and for the organisation of the Muslim League. The Hindus have succeeded in dividing us with the help of the "Mir Jaffars". We have got to make sacrifices and be prepared for the worst. I am confident that the Muslims of Bengal will be true Muslims and will not fail you and their organisation. If Bengal Government and the Governor try to suppress us unlawfully then they will find that Muslims are different now from what they were, and have been in the past.

I have heard on the radio, last night, that you have called a meeting of the Working Committee at Nagpur. I think Bengal, at the present time, has a prior claim on you, and the working committee meeting at Calcutta is far more urgent and necessary than at any other place in India. A meeting of the Working Committee at Calcutta will help to rouse the Muslims and counter the effect of Mr. Fazlul Huq's and the Nawab Bahadur's propaganda that they are Muslim Leaguers and that they are loyal to the Muslim League. I know that nobody believes them, specially after the inclusion of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee in the Cabinet, but they have got the press in their hands and thus have an advantage

over us. As far as propaganda is concerned, if the Working Committee meeting is held here then even the Hindu Press will have to give publicity to it. I therefore, most earnestly request you, on behalf of the Muslims of Bengal, to change the venue of the meeting to Calcutta. I am sure you will be flooded with telegrams and requests for this. We consider this of vital importance, specially if we are all arrested and sent to jail.

Shaheed is very disappointed and dejected particularly as people are sympathising with him for not being nominated to the W.C. He thinks that in view of his stand for the League and attacks on him his position in Bengal will be jeopardised. The Muslims of Bengal will not understand why Isphahani has been preferred to him.

APPENDIX II

Home Department Political (i) Section 1941 No. 94/26/41
Poll. (i)

Detention under rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules of
Sarat Chandra Bose.

Secret:

Interview of Mr. Santosh Kumar Basu, Minister of Public Health and Civil Defence, Bengal and the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca, Minister for Agriculture and Industries, Bengal, with Sarat Chandra Bose at Trichi Jail on 11-2-42 between 9-30 A.M. and 11-30 A.M.

Bose: "Well, Nawab Bahadur, how do you do?"

Nawab: "How are you keeping? Did you get your cook?"

Bose: "They said he was a professional cook, but he is a convict. This petty thing they cannot give. That is the trouble".

Nawab: "I will see about that. What is happening now?"

Bose: "Now he is in hospital. I have got the old convict whom I taught".

Nawab: "I wonder if the Madras Government can do something".

Bose: "Why do you bother about these things."

Nawab: "But you must have your food."

Bose: "Leave that to me."

Santosh: "We all had interview with the Governor. Each one of us saw the Viceroy. They will consider your case along with other security prisoners. They are willing to send you to Kodaikanal or Ooty, but not to Mussorie. They have not yet decided. Government of Bengal has nothing to do. The Bengal Governor has to act under India Government. We are looking into the legal aspect".

Nawab: "I cannot think for a moment whether the Bengal Officers have anything to do with the transfer.

Bose: "The Superintendent of the Presidency Jails, Calcutta knew at least two days in advance that I was to be transferred. How did he know? The ground was that my presence in the Jail was embarrassing to the Bengal Ministers. I won't tell you the source."

Santosh: "This is so important I want to note it down."

Bose: "What was the message given by Porter (Under Secretary) to the Jailor on the 26th afternoon? The message was, "tell Mr. Bose that he must get ready. He must make no excuses." In fact I tackled him to give it in writing. It must be cleared, let the world know. It has been done behind the back of everybody, even behind the Home Minister."

Bose: "My letters are seen at the other end. The Superintendent told me that the Intelligence Section here are very prompt. On that basis I calculated and they were one day late."

Santosh: "They are willing to transfer you anywhere within Madras but we are fighting. They haven't ruled it out yet."

Bose: "Ooty, I understand, has only a sub-jail."

Santosh: "You may be given a house, and home-interned."

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Bose: "They have sanctioned rupees thirty for clothing allowance and family allowance on the same lines. My reply to that was "In no time of my life was I a beggar of Rs. 30 "Do you know this? The Governor told the Chief Minister that the Government of India ordered my arrest by the end of August or beginning of September. The Governor put it off. In what way the Japanese contact affected them from August to December. It is said that I met some Japanese. Churchill did not know until recently that Japan would fight. Am I such a big nationalist to know 6 months in advance that Japan would fight?"

Nawab: "Now, come to our home affairs."

Bose: "I did not want to give you any trouble of 6 days going and coming."

Nawab: "I have come only because of you. Will all the hopes that you have been building be shattered. Dr. Shyam Prasad is rather communal. His mentality is not clear. Your friend here was keeping him under control."

Santosh: "As regards the speeches of Shyam Prasad, people are hesitant. It is because you are not there. If there was another election, the dream you built will be shattered."

Nawab: "If you think members of your bloc should not be in the Government you will be breaking our unity. We are calling a Muslim League conference in Bengal outside Jinnah. It will be a wonderful thing. We are trying our utmost. The more we work together the more strength we will get."

Bose: "If one or two officers in the India Government or Bengal Government could flout the public will, and the Ministry's will in my case, what would be the fate of other prisoners".

Santosh: "If you are going to fight, we will all fight together. We are solid. We must be prepared to act. The Government of India has already passed orders that the cases should be examined by the High Court Judge. I understand that many people have been released in Madras. We are taking our stand upon this."

- Bose: "It is impossible for any Judge to come to any conclusion without hearing both sides."
- Santosh: "There is a feeling that a 'No-confidence Motion' will be brought in the next Budget session. We are not strictly on our saddle yet. That is our position."
- Bose: "Has any political prisoner been released during the past two months? If Ministers do not take any real interest in these things, what will happen?"
- Santosh: "We have not tackled about release. We have not been able to do it."
- Bose: "Everything depends upon the man who is in charge."
- Santosh: "The Home Minister looks at the file. The file does not come to us."
- Bose: "It seems Bannerjee is drawing a scheme to give employment to the detenus inside the jail for some remuneration."
- Santosh: "I do not think that is correct. Politicals did not come to jail for employment."
- Bose: "Has any release been demanded?"
- Santosh: "The question of release will be taken up."
- Bose: "If you cannot do this what is the use of being in the Ministry?"
- Santosh: "It is difficult to do in two months our 'Five Years Plan'. I understand all the cases of security prisoners should be examined. We have even suggested the names of judges. We want to make an approach like Madras."
- Bose: "You can put up a fight."
- Santosh: "That is what we are doing. We are not quiet."
- Bose: "If you allow Bengal Ministry to be merely a Post Office then new orders will be coming every day. If the Government of India could not arrest me in August, then Bengal Government comes in. If it be a fact that I am not disclosing my card. There is time

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yet. U Saw is charged for contact with *Japanese Authority*. I am charged with having contacts with Japanese. There is a world of difference. I won't mention the name. Supposing some Japanese client comes to my house for consultation, why should he not.... I have not met even a single Japanese client for three months prior to my arrest. Supposing a Japanese comes and asks me "What is the idea of 'Freezing Order', will you advise me". I am giving you an instance. I won't disclose my card yet, but this I know, no Japanese client saw me."

Santosh: "The whole question is how to bring it out."

Bose: Why not the Bengal Cabinet ask? You can say 'You have made allegations. We won't be satisfied unless the paper is shown to us. If there is danger to the British Empire.... It is nothing to me. They think that because they get a kicking from the Japanese they can send one or two people outside the province. If U Saw is a Fifth Columnist, why not Churchill? Why did he block the Burma Road? Why not the Government of Bengal say, "We do want him back at Bengal? You have not got the grit."

Santosh: "Supposing they do not yield what are we to do?"

Bose: "You can make things hot for the Government. You want some strong man. About repatriation you ask Home Minister. I am giving you a little time and then I am going to fight. The Bengal convict cook should be taken back. I can receive only four letters a week and write only two. About 18 letters are waiting in the office. There are pin pricks such as I cannot write on my paper, I am supplied with a dirty paper. I cannot keep my own razor."

Santosh: "Lest you should cut your throat."

Bose: "There will be no compromise on the issue of repatriation. They think I am old. My letters will tell them I am not. I buy my own chicken every day. I will be thankful if the Government does not demand rent for my quarters."

- Santosh: "What is the use of our visit, if you do not put it off. Give us some breathing time. We will make an attempt. If we try and fail, what is our position?"
- Bose: "I will think over. If the policy continues to be the same, there is no use."
- Santosh: "We want to be assured of our position. If we do not succeed in Bengal matters, there is no use of continuing. Money is spent like water. War propaganda is going on with paid lecturers and paid volunteers."
- Bose: "What is to be done? How can I sit quite without launching a fight of my own?"
- Santosh: "Things are moving slowly. Everything has to move from Madras to Bengal and Delhi, you should consider. Within seven days of our visit if it (fast?) comes, what will our party think?"
- Bose: "You think of the party. But what about me? I will be done away with. How can I live on 9 annas?"
- Santosh: "Can we arrange by subscriptions?"
- Bose: "No. Why should I depend on charity?"
- Santosh: "What about nominations?"
- Bose: "Leave it to the Party".
- Santosh: "But everybody is looking up to you, you mentioned the three names."
- Bose: "I have no opportunity to discuss with Party Members. You can leave it to the Party. Once I launch a fight the very day you will get a telegram that I have resigned from the Party. I won't start it till the 19th."
- Santosh: "You should not till you hear from us".
- Bose: "When do I hear from you?"
- Santosh: "I must consult everybody."

The Bengal Ministers wanted to have another interview in the afternoon, but it was not allowed. The Superintendent gave them

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permission to extend the time limit by half-an-hour. They brought cheroots, cloths and eatables to Bose. The conversations were in English and not in Bengali. Bose gave them a send off by saying "It is very good of you to come all the way from Calcutta."

Private AU Personal

Forwarded for information to V. T. Bayley Esq., Assistant Director (R), Intelligence Bureau, New Delhi.

No. 973/C.
Madras,
12th February, 1942.

Superintendent of Poilce.
Special Branch C.I.D.

American Official Views of Indian Nationalism 1905—1929

BY

DIWAKAR P. SINGH

Hitherto the generally accepted view had been that American official interest in Indian nationalism began during the Second World War (1939-1945), that prior to it the United States Government had little knowledge of or interest in Indian nationalism. The fact, however, seems to be that American official interest in Indian nationalism began with the manifestation of first symptoms of extremism in Indian politics during the closing decade of the nineteenth century, following the advent of Bal Gangadhar Tilak on the Indian political scene.¹

The beginning of American official interest in Indian nationalism, moreover, was neither sudden nor accidental, but a culmination of more than a century of Indo-American relations, which had "started before the American Revolution."² No doubt, much of this early relationship is shrouded in obscurity, but what has come to light through the efforts of scholars and researchers suggests that from an inconspicuous beginning, the relations between America and India by the end of the nineteenth century had become many-sided and full of possibilities.

This promising relationship between America and India had been cultivated on the unofficial level by American merchantmen, missionaries, poets, philosophers and scholars of Indic studies and by the visiting American statesmen and travellers to India; and on the official level by American Foreign Service Officials (Consuls)

1. Elting E. Morison (ed.), *The letters of Theodore Roosevelt Vol. I 1868-1898* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951) p. 648.

Also see Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and Rise of America to World Power* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 140.

2. W. Norman Brown, *The United States and India and Pakistan* (Cambridge; Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 361.

stationed in India.³ By 1900, the American Consular establishments in India had expanded to nearly half a dozen posts and their "work on the information level had increased."⁴

It was just when the United States had vigorously started to "look outward"⁵ and begun to play a more active role in the world affairs than ever before, that the first signs of a revolutionary nationalism also made its appearance in India. The political phenomena which seemed to be developing in India created uneasiness in American official circles. Moreover, the Spanish-American War had already begun an era of Anglo-American cordiality and laid the foundations for a closer concert between the United States and Great Britain in facing the problems of the world.^{5a} Under these circumstances, it was natural that as soon as there were new manifestations of nationalism in India in 1905, the American official response to it was sharp and immediate. As a matter of fact, if there appears to be a general paucity of attention paid by the United States Government and its representatives in India to Indian nationalism before 1905, it was "because more serious crises incurred by Indian demands for *Swaraj* did not assume wide significance until after the beginning of the twentieth century."⁶

It was in 1905 that "the Indian Revolution began."⁷ The period before 1905, although important, was the seed-time of Indian

3. Bernard Saul Stern, 'American Views of India and Indians, 1857-1900', (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1956) pp. 1-6; Also see Harold R. Issacs, *Scratches on our Minds, American Images of China and India* (New York: John Day Co., 1958), p. 259; Also S. M. Pathak "American Protestant Missions in India, A study of their Activities and Influences, 1813-1910" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1964), p. 335.

4. Earl Robert Schmidt, "American Relations with South Asia, 1900-1940, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in International Relations, University of Pennsylvania, 1955), p. 370.

5. Julius W. Pratt, *A History of United States Foreign Policy* (New York: Prentice Hall and Co., 1955), p. 381.

5a. Sir Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, Vol. IV (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1958), p. 332.

6. Bernard Saul Stern, "American Views of India and Indians, 1857-1900", p. 370.

7. R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1963), p. xvi.

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nationalism, when the foundation for future progress was laid. Gandhi has rightly said that "the seed is never seen" and "works underneath the ground." Thus, it was only when "the real awakening took place after the partition of Bengal"⁸ and the Swadeshi and the boycott movement, though beginning as a local movement of protest, led to and merged itself in, a national struggle of all-India character that its impact was directly felt by American official representatives stationed in India. As a result, between 1905 and 1929, there was steady growth in American official interest in Indian nationalism.

Both these dates, i.e., 1905 and 1929, are great landmarks in the history of India's struggle for freedom. The year 1905 marked the end of the period of "political mendicancy"⁹ and the beginning of a more militant phase of Indian nationalism. This phase came to an end with the advent of Gandhi on the Indian political scene in 1919, who gave a new direction and a new purpose to the Indian nationalist movement. Henceforth, Gandhi dominated the political scene; it mattered little whether he was in the vanguard of the national struggle, or in prison or political retirement. The period between 1919-1929 marked the first crucial decade of the Gandhian era. It began with the first experiment of non-violent non-cooperation on a national scale and ended with the demand for complete independence and a call for the launching of general civil disobedience.

During this period of nearly a quarter of a century (from 1905 to 1929), American official views and attitudes towards Indian nationalism were subject to change with the changing political kaleidoscope in India. It depended as much on the nature and complexion of a particular political phenomena in India as on the state of the political climate in the United States. No less important in its influence on the American official attitude were the balance of power among nations and other world events and international

8. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad, Navjivan Publishing House, 1938), pp. 24-25.

9. C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1947), p. 82.

developments.¹⁰ In the period between 1905-1919 also, all these forces can be seen at work in determining American official attitude towards Indian nationalism. The extent of the influence of each factor, however, varied from event to event.

The Swadeshi and boycott movements first drew the American official attention towards Indian nationalism. Although the immediate cause of the Swadeshi and boycott campaigns had been the partition of Bengal, the new spirit which was growing and spreading over India was also being fostered by an awakening in the entire Eastern World following the marvellous victories of a little Asiatic David (Japan) over an European Goliath (Russia). The decisive battle of the Tsushima Straits moved Asia from one end to the other; the sleep of the centuries was finally broken. The United States could not have remained indifferent to the impact of the Russo-Japanese War in other parts of Asia. In India moreover, the Swadeshi and boycott campaigns posed an ideological threat to the concepts of free trade and the open-door and a practical threat to foreign governments and foreign merchants interested in trade with India. These two principles (free trade and the open-door) had been the basic tenets of the United States policy since the beginning of its contacts with Asia and, as the boycott campaign affected the sale of American manufactures as well, American official concern for events in India was genuine.¹¹

But the Swadeshi and boycott campaigns, which were being preached in India with religious fervor, did not excite that concern and anxiety in American minds which were later shown when there was manifestation of extremism and terrorism in India. Despite the fact that the boycott adversely affected the sale of American manufactures in India and hurt American economic interests, an undercurrent of sympathy and understanding of this phase of Indian nationalist protest to British administrative policies were noticeable in the American Consular reports on political developments in India. According to American Consul General William H. Michael, the only way the Indian could oppose the British was

10. Author's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation on "American Official Attitudes Towards the Indian Nationalist Movement", University of Hawaii, 1964, p. 446.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 447.

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"by protest in words, by the boycott without violence, and by lifting himself above dependence as far as possible,"¹² thus foreshadowing the philosophy of Gandhi's non-violent resistance and economic self-dependence. In the situation then obtaining in India, a boycott was considered to be "the only logical and potent argument in their fight for large concern in the Government."¹³ Moreover, there was also a clear recognition of the fact that India would continue to "groan" in its wretched poverty so long as her movable and surplus wealth continued to flow "into the coffers of English capitalists."¹⁴ This attitude, however, changed with the Rawalpindi riots and manifestations of widespread violence and bomb-outrages in and out of Bengal.

Not since the Mutiny had India witnessed the violence that broke out in the last months of 1908. At this, the American official representatives in India began to feel that there was a plan of kindling a revolution along the line of 1857, although it was never seriously felt that such an uprising would succeed.

Since the closing decade of the nineteenth century the British Government had attached great importance to American official and unofficial views of British rule in India. As early as December 1897, Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British Ambassador in Washington, had drawn the attention of the British Foreign Office to defamatory articles in the United States against British rule in India.¹⁵ In view of this the statement of a distinguished American, William Jennings Bryan, after his visit to India in 1906, that the British rule in India was "worse than Russian despotism"¹⁶ was enough

12. Calcutta, September 19, 1906.

Records of the U.S. Deptt. of State in the National Archives, Washington D.C. (hereinafter indicated by the post and date of the despatch.)

13. Calcutta, August 8, 1907.

14. Calcutta, October 27, 1906.

15. British Foreign Office, A despatch relating to defamatory articles published in the United States against British rule in India, No. 2600, India Office Library, IOL, LI 610|590|105; Mic. Reel 10, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina.

16. William Jennings Bryan, *British Rule in India* (Westminster: published by the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, 1906), pp. 6-8.

to cause concern in the British mind. Moreover, a section of the American press during 1907-1908 published certain articles which were critical of British rule in India. On the other hand, President Theodore Roosevelt, in response to the appeals of British friends, openly praised British rule in India to the great delight of the British.^{16a} William Howard Taft thought precisely the same way as his predecessor, holding that "English rule in India was a great advance for humanity."¹⁷ Both represented and reflected a state of American opinion and political climate which was in the ascendancy.

President Theodore Roosevelt, however, was not opposed to orderly constitutional advance in India. Indeed, when Sir John Morley, the Liberal British Secretary of State for India undertook to introduce reforms in India, Roosevelt wished him god-speed in his efforts. Roosevelt realized that the conquering countries had a moral responsibility of administering their conquered territories and possessions not in their own interests, but in the interests of the conquered peoples.^{17a} Similarly, American official representatives in India saw in the contemplated reforms the dawn of a new era in India and expressed immense gratification when the British Government revoked the hated partition of Bengal.

Efforts by Indian nationals in the United States to promote India's freedom also drew American official attention during 1905-1919. The Indian nationalist emigres in the United States rendered yeomen's service to the cause of Indian freedom by exposing the true nature of British rule and by counteracting false British propaganda regarding India in America. Although in the nineties of the last century Vivekananda had tried to correct the many misconceptions about India in America and made a section of the American public appreciative of India's hoary past and her emerg-

16a. Elting E. Morison, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Vol. VI. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 1370. Also see "Theodore Roosevelt on India," *Current Literature*, Vol. 45, pp. 376-8 (April 1909): Also *The New York Times*, January 19, 1909.

17. *Some American Opinions on the Indian Empire* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1916), p. 3.

17a. Elting E. Morison, *Op. cit.* p. 1206.

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ing national aspirations, organized nationalist activities began only after 1905.

The British Ambassador in Washington, Sir James Bryce, took cognizance of the nationalist activities of British Indian subjects in the United States. In a letter to the Governor General of India in 1908, Sir John Morley expressed his concern "that a tide of strong opinion might one day swell in U.S.A. about our rule in India, of the same kind as had prevailed here (in England) about Austria, Russia and the Turks."¹⁸ By 1910, the Inspector General of the Criminal Investigation of the Government of India was drawing the attention of American Consul General in India to the fact that American soil was being utilized by Indian nationals to undermine the British rule in India by the publication of "revolutionary and anarchical papers,"¹⁹ and their shipment to India. The United States Government however, did not take any drastic measure to stop the legitimate and perfectly peaceful Indian nationalist propaganda on its soil.

In 1910 an Indian Association was organized in Portland (Oregon) and in 1913 during the "anti-imperialist Wilson administration,"²⁰ the Hindustan Ghadar Party was formed on American soil with its avowed object of overthrowing British imperialist rule in India and establishing a sovereign democratic national republic.^{20a} It aimed at an armed revolution.

With the outbreak of the First World War, the members of the Hindustan Ghadar Party in America became involved in clandestine conspirational plots^{20b} with the German diplomatic representatives in

18. Secretary of State for India, "Letters to Earl of Minto, Vol. I, 1906-1908," India Office Library, Mic. Reel 5, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina.

19. Calcutta, January 23, 1910.

20. Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

20a. Madras, May 6, 1915; Also see Khushwant Singh, *The Sikhs* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1953), pp. 123-124.

20b. Mark Naidis, "Propaganda of the Godor Party" *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XX, No. 13 (August, 1951), p. 251. Also see Girles T. Brown, "The Hindi Conspiracy 1914-1917" *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (August, 1948). See also, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies in India*, Cmd. 9190 (London, H. M. Stationary office, 1918), VIII, 61.

the United States, under the direction of the Berlin Committee for India's Freedom and the German Foreign Office. With their base in California, the Ghadarites were engaged in gathering arms and smuggling them to India. There was also an effort to organize an armed expedition to bring about an armed rebellion in India, on the largest scale since the Mutiny. But the Ghadarites, who had sailed on the steamship *Korea* from San Francisco on their revolutionary expedition, were apprehended and the plan of revolution was nipped in the bud.

This, however, brought to light the "freedom of restraint which they (Indian nationals) were allowed to enjoy in the United States."²¹ In spite of British diplomatic representations, the United States Government was not disposed to take action against Indian nationals so long as no unimpeachable connection was established between them and the German sabotage ring, thus warranting their conviction under the Federal Criminal laws.

The Lahore conspiracy trial, however, proved without a shadow of doubt that the "conspiracy for the overthrow of British rule in India was, in fact, planned, organized and financed in the United States."²² The British Government sent a special representative to Washington, who on January 24, 1916, presented a memorandum to the Secretary of State on the Ghadar activities in the United States and also impressed upon the Secretary of State that the suppression of the pernicious Ghadar propaganda and breaking up of the seditious society by the U.S. Government "would be regarded both by the British Government and the British people as a most friendly act."²³ No action however, was taken by the United States Government until March 1916, when it was fully established that Indian nationals were involved with German agents in the United States to bring about an armed rebellion in India. Large numbers of Indians were taken into custody in San Francisco, Chicago and New York charged with violating the

21. From the letter of Sir Charles Cleveland, Director General of Criminal Investigation, Government of India to American Consul in Bombay. See despatch from Bombay, August 2, 1914.

22. British Memorandum to the Sec. of State on the Indian Revolutionary Movement in the U.S., January 25, 1916, NA, RDS, Index No. 845. 00/206.

23. *Ibid.*

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neutrality of the United States under Section 37 of the Criminal Code. Thus the hey-day of Ghadar revolutionary activity was over and there was a decided hardening of American official opinion towards Indian nationalist activities in the United States.

If, however, the clandestine and conspirational activities of the members of the Hindustan Ghadar Party and their involvement in plot with German agents hardened American official attitude towards Indian nationalist activities in the United States and caused incalculable harm to India's cause, the perfectly constitutional, peaceful and legitimate propaganda work of Lala Lajpat Rai, and his India Home Rule League of America, for the cause of Indian freedom, proved far more enduring in its results. With a break of six months, Rai lived in exile in the United States continuously for more than five years (November 1914 to November 1919). As a result of his efforts the cause of Indian freedom was carried to the Chambers of U.S. Congress, at a time when the Paris Peace Conference was re-drawing the map of Europe and Asia on the doctrine of self-determination.^{23a} Lala Lajpat Rai and Dr. N. S. Hardiker assisted Mr Dudley Field Malone in presenting on behalf of the India Home Rule League of America the Indian nationalist case for self-determination before the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate.^{23b} As a result of Rai's efforts various Congressmen and Senators echoed, in their speeches to the House of Representatives and the Senate, India's national aspirations for self-determination and openly condemned the British rule in India.^{23c} The pattern of constructive and constitutional work and nation-wide lecture tours, initiated by Lajpat Rai, was carried forward by Dr Syed Hussain. Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani, Dr. Anup Singh, Dr. H. T. Mazumdar, and Sardar J. J. Singh. Their sustain-

23a. J. T. Sundarland, "Mr. Rai's Work in America," *Young India*, Rai Number, Vol. III. No. 2 (February, 1920) p. 42. *Young India*, a monthly magazine was founded by Lala Lajpat Rai, himself as its editor as the organ of *India Home Rule League of America* (Oct. 1917) Rai was its founder President.

23b. "India Before the Senate." *Young India*, Vol. II No. 10 (October, 1919) pp. 219-220. Also see Rusom Rustomji's letter to Senator Lodge, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *National Archives*, Records of the Deptt. of State, Index No. 845 00|247.

23c. U.S. Congressional Record, Vol. 58 Part 4 (Washington: Govt. Printing office, 1919), pp. 4042-4043. Also see Vol. 58, Part 8, pp. 6607-6609.

ed efforts of decades also received impetus from temporary visitors from India—such as Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Reverend C. F. Andrews, and the sister of Prime Minister Nehru, Madame V. L. Pandit.

Moreover, during the first World War, the principle of Wilsonian self-determination stimulated greatly the Home Rule movement in India. The War, although it did not originate the demand for Home Rule in India, gave it a new significance and a new urgency and an air of reality which it had never possessed before. The unequivocal support which the ideal of self-determination received from the American President, Woodrow Wilson, gave moral impetus to the cause of freedom everywhere. Lala Lajpat Rai firmly believed that Wilson's words were "going to be the war-cry of all small and subject and oppressed nationalities in the world" for whom Woodrow Wilson had conferred "a new charter of democracy and liberty."²⁴

In India, the Home Rule movement, which had been gathering momentum under the leadership of Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant, reached its peak in 1917. For carrying on Home Rule agitation and shortly after printing and circulating Wilson's War message in India, Mrs. Besant was interned by the Madras Government. Voices of protest were raised in the United States, by American Theosophists and others. The President of the All India Home Rule League, Sir S. Subramania Aiyar, addressed a letter to President Wilson in which he drew President Wilson's attention to British misrule and oppression in India, the latest instance of which was the internment of Mrs. Annie Besant.^{24a}

But as Sir Subramania Aiyar's letter to President Wilson was released to the press by Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner, who had been the bearers of the letter, without the prior consent or approval of its distinguished addressee, on the advice of the Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, the letter was not formally acknowledged by the President.^{24b} But its publication in the American press created an

24. Lala Lajpat Rai, "India and the World War," *Young India*, Vol. I, No. 2 (February, 1918), p. 2.

24a. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1919, part II, p. 45.

24b. See National Archives, Records of the U.S. Department of State, Index Nos. 845.00|512 and 849.00|213; 845.00|217. Also see British Embassy Memorandum No. 3 January 2, 1918, National Archives, Records of the U.S. Deptt. of State, Index No. 845.00|216.

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impression in India that Sir Subramania's letter "profoundly convulsed America"²⁵ and brought about some unwonted change in the angle of vision of the stolid Indian Government, whose evidences were seen in the decision to release Mrs. Annie Besant and the announced visit to India of the Secretary of State for India.

On January 2nd, 1919 Lokamanya Tilak, accredited by the Indian National Congress to present India's case before the Paris Peace Conference, addressed a letter to President Woodrow Wilson, asking for support in favour of India's claim to self-determination.

Tilak wrote :

The world's hope for peace and justice is centered in you as the author of the great principle of self-determination. I, therefore, feel impelled to bring the enclosed brochure (on India's case for self-determination) to your notice for consideration and such action as the peace of the world and the principles of right and justice for all nations may demand in the case of India.²⁶

On behalf of President-Wilson, Tilak's letter was acknowledged by Mr. Gilbert Close, who expressed the hope that India would achieve its goal of self-determination in the fullness of time.²⁷

In India, the influence of the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination was pronounced. In a sense it became the battle-cry of the post-war Indian nationalist movement

The fact that the tempo of political agitation in India had risen to new heights during the War did not remain unnoticed by the American Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, who instructed the American Consular officials to report "promptly and frequently all political developments in India."²⁸

In the immediate post-war years, American official interest in Indian nationalism rose to new heights. It was primarily due to

25. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1919, part II p. 46.

26. Editorial Notes and News, "Tilak and Mr. Wilson," *Young India*, Vol. II, No. 2 (November, 1919), p. 244.

27. T. V. Parvate, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), p. 463.

28. U.S. Department of State, Telegram sent to American Consul General in Calcutta, April 18, 1918, NA, RDS, Index No. 845 00/219 a.

the post-war nationalist upsurge in India. Moreover, there was a resurgence of Pan-Islamic sentiment in India in support of the decadent Ottoman Sultan as the Caliph of Islam. This had solidified the Indian opposition to Britain. Just at this time the advent of Gandhi on the Indian political scene, gave to Indian nationalism a new depth and a new direction. It was generally believed by the American official representatives in India that as a result of the advent of Gandhi the situation in India had irrevocably changed. India would never be the same and England's position there would become as "untenable as in Ireland."²⁹

Although for about half a decade from 1922 to 1927 there was a lull in the political life of India and the course of the Indian nationalist movement look like a monotonous tale of pious resolutions, factional bickerings, perpetual strifes in the Councils and worst of all, of occasional orgies of communal violence, the extent of the American official interest, instead of diminishing, further increased. It was evident in the large volume of political reportings on the Indian political situation from American official representatives in India and England.

With the appointment of the Simon Commission in the latter part of 1927, there was a clear recognition in the American official circles in India and Britain that the peaceful realization by India of her national destiny within the British Empire was destined to be of "supreme consequence"³⁰ not only to India and Britain who were directly connected, but to the United States as well. Although there seemed to be general agreement among them that only a purely Parliamentary Commission was conceivable at the moment, they also took note of the strong disaffection which the British decision to exclude Indians from the Commission roused in India.

However keenly the American officials and the Government of the United States felt for the Indian nationalist cause, they had to keep their views and feelings to themselves, a closely guarded confidential secret of the files, to avoid any diplomatic embarrass-

29. Bombay, August 21, 1921, letter from American Consul in Bombay to U. Grant Smith of the American legation in Vienna, forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of State.

30. London, November 14, 1927, despatch from American Embassy in London, NA, RDS, Index No. - 845. 0132.

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ment in their relations with Britain. Still, the invitation extended by the United States Government to the Government of India in 1928 to become an original signatory to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, on the same footing as that of other self-Governing Dominions of the British Empire, showed the working of American official mind on this point. The Department of State was neither apathetic, to nor unaware of political developments in India, from the very outset of the manifestations of nationalism in India. The pronounced interest evinced by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the Indian problem during the Second World War was, therefore, not an isolated phenomenon or just an outcome of political expediency or the exigencies of war, but the culmination of an interest which had begun decades ago in the democratic development and self-determination of the Indian nation.

S. A. Bhisey

BY

R. P. PATWARDHAN

Shankar Abaji Bhisey (1867-1935) was an exceptional man for his time and people. Born in a high-caste Hindu family in Bombay in the latter half of the nineteenth century, he displayed from early childhood a bent towards mechanics and craftsmanship. He finished his High School education in 1888, and then took up service under Government. In 1895 he had an opportunity to go to England, where he spent six months and exhibited some of the scientific optical illusions invented by himself, which won praise from several English papers. In 1898 he happened to see the advertisement of a prize by the London Society of Arts, Letters and Sciences for an automatic Weighing, Delivering, and Registering Machine for sugar, flour, tea, coffee etc. He competed, and won the prize. That made him known in the scientific world, and the Society of Arts offered him its fellowship. Next year (1899), encouraged by some prominent Bombay leaders, he went to England to see if his inventive talent could be put to more effective use there. He had an introduction to Dadabhai Naoroji from D. E. Wacha, and he met Dadabhai and tried to interest him in his attempt to form a Syndicate or Syndicates to exploit his inventions commercially.

He had made several inventions already: artistic lamps (to which he gave the name of "Vertoscopes") which might be used as shop-window attraction or for advertisement purposes, and which won a gold medal at an international Exhibition in 1902; auto-flushers, for flushing and disinfecting water-closets; a tyre puncture preventer; a machine for casting and setting types (which he called 'Spasotype') etc. He devised some improvements in the existing type-writing machines, which, in the opinion of Dadabhai's socialist friend, H. M. Hyndman, although not of a crucial character, were calculated to "greatly improve the appearance of type-written work." He thought of a device by which an electric lamp could

be regulated to any candle power as desired, and of another by which electric lamps could be fixed at any point without requiring holders. Indeed, it seemed as if his inventive genius knew no limitation of subject in its endeavour to alleviate human toil or suffering; thus, he devised a mechanical apparatus to relieve headache. "I have sent to Bombay," he says in a letter to Dadabhai, dated 7th December, 1904, "by last mail an apparatus to cure headache mechanically. It is simply in the form of a hoop or frame having forked ends and holding air-inflated pads which latter could be easily adjusted right on the temples of the forehead and screwed forward to bring about desired pressure on the temples to relieve the pain. Mrs. Bhise was suffering severely from headache during her late confinement and the device was found to be very effective. I enclose Dr. Griffith's testimonial." In another letter, dated 16th December 1904, he tells Dadabhai, "Last week I was very busy in making a Lavigating (?) machine for spices as described in the accompanying circular. I completed the machine and sent it to Bombay by last mail for exhibiting at the Exhibition. I feel sure it would be appreciated by Indian ladies for being a handy machine for making Chutnies and grinding spices". And, as is well-known, he invented and put on the market an iodine compound known as atomidine (atomic iodine), which, he says, was "acknowledged to be the only water-soluble, non-poisonous, non-irritating, odourless compound of iodine known to science. . . . It is the result of 10 years of my research work and is prescribed by thousands of physicians and dentists in this country (meaning U.S.A.) and abroad." But the inventions on which he spent years of his life, and which attracted most attention, were the multiple mould type-founding machine, and the Single Type Casting and Composing machine. Of the former, Hyndman said in a letter to Dadabhai, dated 11th January, 1902, that 'in proper hand a great deal could be made of this invention'. "*The Scientific American*", Bhisey tells us, "published an illustrated article about these machines in August 1917, and the '*Inland Printer*' and other technical papers also published illustrated articles".

Unfortunately, it seems that the financial backing, which was necessary to make a commercial success of the inventions, was not easy to find. A 'Bhise Patents Syndicate' was formed in 1901, with Dadabhai's help, to exploit the earlier inventions—the adver-

tising lamp and others. Dadabhai agreed to put £ 300 in this venture, and ultimately, during the next seven years, he advanced to Bhise as much as £ 2600." Another Company, named "Bhiso-Type Ltd.", was formed in 1905, to 'patent, further develop and exploit' the type-casting and composing invention, which had been theoretically completed by that time. Hyndman helped in founding his new Company. The resources of Bhiso-Type Ltd, too, however, fell short of the needs; Dadabhai stopped giving further help after about August 1908—he himself had left England for good a year before)—and for some time Bhisey and his family were reduced to severe straits in England. Luckily, just then, Mr. Ratan Tata's interest was drawn to his inventions; G. K. Gokhale, who also took keen interest in Bhisey's inventions, exerted his influence with Mr. Tata; and so a 'Tata-Bhiso Syndicate' was formed in 1909. Unfortunately, even this did not bring an end to Bhise's troubles. Writing to Dadabhai from London on 7th October, 1915, Bhisey says, "I did not write to you for a long time because I had not any cheering news to give you. I had been frightfully worried to progress with my work. Owing to the war many men left my workshop and I could not get any new men nor get any work done outside. However, with greatest difficulty and with your blessings and good wishes I am very glad to inform you that I recently succeeded in successfully completing my new machine for casting *Single Types* specially designed for Printers' use which I invented nearly two years ago and which is different in principle and working of the multiple mould machine for Type Founders on which I spent previous years. I have the pleasure of sending you per separate Book Post today a copy of the British and Colonial Printer in which you will find a special editorial about this new machine.

My present difficulty and great anxiety is to get more machines built commercially on the lines of my present model machine for sale. In the present state of war work it is difficult to get any such machines built here. The only course is to get these built in America where it is also a difficult matter, and besides as it will be necessary for me and my foreman to go there for some months and will require a further capital of at least a £ 1000 I have to depend upon Mr. Tata's further help and should I fail to get it my whole life's work will be precarious. It is a great pity and mis-

fortune that the war should break out when my work was coming to a fruitful issue."

Bhisey's next letter to Dadabhai is written from America. It is dated August 4, 1916, and says, "As I wrote to you some time ago, my Single Type Casting machine was completed in December 1914, and Mr. Tata was very pleased with its successful working in London before he went to India. I succeeded in accomplishing then the 'Inventor's Task' of bringing an invention from a theoretical to a practical stage and in doing that, even my competitors had to admit frankly of my succeeding in solving some intricate problems that were unsuccessfully tried by many noted inventors during the last sixty-five years.

The present work of getting the machine manufactured and placed upon the market was beyond my power. Owing to the war I could not get any firm in England to manufacture the machine, so after spending uselessly over a year in England I came here last month to get the machine manufactured. Firms here are also very busy and caught with the war fever and the dollar-making spirit. Still I have a better chance of accomplishing my object here than in London. I expect to be here for about four months."

Ultimately, Bhisey stayed in America not for the next four months, but for eighteen years and more, and passed away in New York on 7th April, 1935. In a brief biography of Bhisey in Marathi, by Mr. J. B. Kulkarni, published in 1969, we are told that Bhisey succeeded in 1920 in forming a Company in America, called the 'Bisey Ideal Type-Caster Corporation', which manufactured and put his machines on the market, thus accomplishing the great object of his life.

What puzzles a student of Bhisey's life and work, however, is that the name of an inventor who made important contributions to the type-casting and composing industry should not find even a bare mention in such standard American reference works as McGraw-Hill's 'Encyclopaedia of Science and Technology' or the 'American Encyclopaedia.'

Issue Perception and the Indian Struggle for Independence—1885 to 1909

BY

LYNN TRIPLETT

The absence of revolutionary warfare, in comparison with other Asian experiences, characterizes the Indian struggle for independence. This was true even before Gandhi devised his non-violent approach to Indian freedom. In the analysis of the pre-Gandhian Indian movement for independence, the question is why a military confrontation or violent opposition against the British did not characterize the Indian freedom movement from 1885, the year of founding of the Indian National Congress, to 1909, the year which marks the end of the first phase of Indian Government-Congress relations.¹

The above question is even more pertinent when one remembers that the leaders of the national movement were western educated and very much aware of developments both in the West and Asia. The West surely supplied a surfeit of examples of successful violent revolution, and the Japanese demonstrated the applicability of this violence against the West in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905. Violent militant confrontation with the British would certainly be one option open to the leaders in their struggle for Independence.

1. Indian nationalism always presents a problem for the scholar who wishes to take an integral approach. The phrase "Indian struggle" immediately leads one to ask which Indians—Hindu, Muslim, Bengali, Punjabi or Maharashtrian? Our first problem is to define who are talking about when we say issue perception on the part of the Indians. Despite the multiple nature of Indian participation, few will argue that the main thrust of Indian nationalism developed within the context of the Indian National Congress. Therefore, the Congress resolutions provide the best guide to the issues and factors the majority of participants in the struggle were perceiving. I have accordingly analysed the Congress resolutions to determine the issues and scope of perception on the part of the Indian Nationalists.

My hypothesis is that the scope of issue perception on the part of both the Indians and the British provides the key to the nature of the struggle for Independence during those years. The value of focussing on the issues of perception debated by both the British and the Indians lies in the conceptualization of the nature of the Indian struggle for Independence. The historian's treatment of this movement has resulted in little understanding of the dynamics of conflict between the British and the Indians. When this has been best accomplished, attention has been directed toward Gandhi and his satyagrahas; Joan Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence* is a good example.² The pre-Gandhi movement has not received such treatment. A typical example of the interpretation of the independence movement is Daniel Argov's description:

The national movement in India is distinguished from other searches for independence and national identity by the quality of intellectual debate among the political leaders.³

Although Argov, who is analyzing the Indian nationalist movement from within and focusing on the process of Indian demands, succeeds in providing and enumerating the positions taken by both the British and the Indians. His treatment does not provide any answers to such questions as why the Indians were content to agitate peacefully, even when it became clear that their demands and British interests were incompatible. I wish to go one step further and suggest that the content of the issues in that "debate" are of great importance in ascertaining the nature of the early struggle for independence. Recent conflict studies suggest that whether the issues perceived are symbolic and reified or concrete and specific indicate whether the confrontation may assume violent configurations or not.

Recent studies in conflict analysis provide insight into the dynamics of relationship between protagonist and antagonist.⁴

2. Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

3. Daniel Argov, *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement 1883-1920* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1967), Foreword. Hereafter cited as Argov.

4. Michael P. Sullivan, "International and Community Conflict: Comparing Levels of Theory" (Department of Government, University of Arizona, 1968). Hereafter cited as Sullivan.

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Two important concepts in this paper are conflict and the "scope" of the conflict. For a definition of conflict, Kenneth Boulding provides a satisfactory beginning.

A situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of others.⁵

At the core of the conflict are certain issues that the individuals perceive to represent the conflict. The scope of the conflict then is how the participants view it; whether it is concentrated upon specific issues or questions or whether it is concentrated upon nebulous or symbolic issues would make the scope narrow or wide by our definition. Evidence suggests that resolution of a conflict depends on what kind of issues the decision makers are viewing at the time.⁶

Also, the findings in conflict studies provide a means of suggesting one factor, issues, pertinent to the shape and direction the Indian struggle for independence followed, i.e., further, one can also suggest reasons for variations within the method of opposition to the British. By this I am referring to the Extremist, Moderate split that finalized in 1907. The issue perception and pronouncements by both the British and the leaders of Congress have great impact on the timing of Indian terrorism, or even its appearance.

A psychological premise exists that relates issue perception to the probability of overt violence. Daniel Katz, in his article, "The Psychological Barriers to Communication,"⁷ maintains that one problem in communication is the difficulty of differentiation between words which refer to actual reality and those which refer to concepts. People tend to reify concepts, and if the communication takes place in a stress situation, people undergo a reaction which may narrow the stressed individual's focus. Thus, if there is a failure to differentiate between reality and concepts in a stress situation, issue perception may become focussed narrowly on a reified concept. This holds great great importance in a conflict

5. Kenneth Boulding, *Conflict and Defence: A General Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 5.

6. Sullivan, p. 12.

7. Sullivan, p. 11.

situation where the decision makers cast their choices in accordance with their issue perception.

A corollary to the importance of issue perception that has pertinence to the Indian movement is the observation that hostility rises when incompatible interests are present. And, "once set in motion, hostility can sustain conflict unaided by disagreement about particular issues. The original issues may be settled, yet the controversy continues unabated. The antagonistic relationship has now become direct; it no longer draws sustenance from an outside element—an issue."⁸ This holds importance for subsequent behavior of the "extremists" of the Indian independence movement.

James Coleman has developed a model of conflict that provides a means of measuring the development of the dynamics between the British and the Indians.⁹ In the focus on issues, Coleman maintains that if the conflict eventuates in violence, fundamental transformations take place in the course of a conflict—the issues move from the specific to the general; new and different issues arise; and what began as disagreement ends up in antagonism between the parties. The lack of these developments strongly indicates an adumbration of violent conflict occurring.¹⁰ When decision-makers have to decide whether a conflict is essential, and the perceived issues are general and symbolic, compromise is much less likely and violence much more probable. Conversely, if the focus on issues remains relatively stable, or they only change over long periods of time and are specific, the possibilities of resolution short of violence is likely.

This paper explores the probability that one factor in the lack of violent confrontation between the British and Indians from 1885 to 1919 was the ability of both the British and Indians to remain focussed upon specific issues. A consequence of this thesis is that the relatively violent period of British-Indian relations from 1905-1916 coincides with the allusion to more symbolic referents by both the British and Indians. To test this hypothesis, the issues and goals of both the National Congress and

8. Sullivan, p. 12.

9. James Coleman, *Community Conflict* (New York). The Free Press, 1957, p. 10. Hereafter cited as Coleman.

10. Coleman, p. 10.

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the Government of India have been analysed to ascertain the nature of the scope of perception.

The period from 1885 to 1905 certainly was not one of immoderation on the part of Congress. Indeed, within the definition of this paper, it is not likely that a "conflict" existed between the Congress leaders and the Government of India. But the continuity of demands raised by Congress beginning in 1885 until 1905 form a commentary on the nature of the early Congress. It is significant to record the earliest resolution, if only to illustrate the specificity of the demands and the lack of symbolic issues.

The Congress in 1885 asked for the abolition of the Council of Secretary of State, to be replaced by a standing committee in Parliament. This was an early recognition of the need for a legislative check on government machinery that made the Government and the policies of the Secretary of State for India virtually autonomous. The resolution continued that since this object was not likely to be acceded to, a reform of the Council should take place. The character of the Council would be advisory, not administrative, and members of the Council would be partly elected and partly nominated.¹¹ In reference to constitutional changes, the first and second sessions called for the local legislative councils to be expanded with elected Indian members. In the second session, the percentage of elected Indians was to be fifty percent and provided for appeals against executive action by the Government of India.¹²

An explanation for the moderation of the first congresses, beyond that of a young organization seeking recognition by the Indians as a spokesman and by the Government of India as a surveyor of Indian grievances, is found in the social-economic-educational background of the leaders. The importance of this western educated middle class Indian background is found in the early Congress speech of Gokhale.

Liberalism and moderation will be the watch-words of our association. The spirit of liberalism implies a freedom

11. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress 1885-1935* (Bombay: Padma Publications Ltd., 1946), Vol. 1, p. 24. Hereafter cited as Sitaramayya.

12. Sitaramayya, pp. 24-25.

from race and creed prejudices and a steady devotion to all that seeks to do justice between man and man, giving to the rulers the loyalty due to the law that they are bound to administer, but securing at the same time to the people the equality which is their right under the law. Moderation implies the conditions of never vainly aspiring after the impossible or after too remote ideals, but striving each day to take the next step in the order of natural growth that lies nearest to our hands in a spirit of compromise and fairness.¹³

This spirit set the context of National Congress resolutions for the next ten years. When the Ilbert Bill served to solidify both the British position and the Indian attitude, insight into the leaders' thinking is provided by the candid explanation of Banerjea as he returned to Calcutta with the failure of passage of the bill:

"We have everything to lose, nothing to gain by the severance of our connection with England. We owe whatever position or prestige we have acquired to our English education and culture. If you were to leave the country, our English education and culture would be at a discount. We are not particularly anxious to commit political suicide."¹⁴

The early Congress leaders, then, pinned their hopes on the Liberal party in England and justified their requests for Indian representation in the British Government of India on the basis of England's pledges to India by Munro, Lawrence and Queen Victoria. However, the Viceroy and Secretaries of State for India repudiated the feasibility of introducing those institutions until 1917. The effect of the latter's actions may perhaps be summed in the statement:

A time may conceivably come ... to leave India to herself but for the present it is necessary to govern her as if we were to govern her forever.¹⁵

Although this reluctance would come to define a conflict situation between the British and the Indians, this was not immediately so. On the contrary, the British demonstrated the trait so responsible for moderation on both sides. Lord Dufferin, by

13. K. P. Karunakaran, *Continuity and Change in Indian Politics*, (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1964), p. 30. Hereafter cited as Karunakaran.

14. Argov, p. 56.

15. Argov, foreward, pp. x and xi.

1892, saw fit to acknowledge demands Congress had been making. This was the Indian Councils Act of 1892. With the aid of a Council of India committee, Dufferin drew up "a plan for the enlargement of our Provincial Councils, for the enhancement of their status, the multiplication of their functions, the partial introduction...of the elective principle, and the liberalisation of their general character as political institutions."¹⁶ The bill finally provided for enlarged membership in the Provincial Councils, such membership at the discretion of nomination by the Governor-General. This was to allow a means of incorporating elected members into the Councils. The Act also allowed the Councils to discuss, not vote, the budget and indulge in criticism of the financial policy of the Government. Finally, the members of Councils were granted the right of questioning on matters of public interest, this being subject to conditions prescribed by the Governor-General or the Provincial Governor.¹⁷ Thus reinforced in the manner and mode of their demands, Congress continued making essentially the same overtures to the Government of India until the nineteen hundreds.

With precedent set for Indian involvement in the local and Provincial councils, the National Congress took up the matter of the rule of the Government of India. Demands were made for representation in the House of Commons, for expansion of the Councils in the country, and appointment of Indians to the Council of Secretary of State and Executive Council.¹⁸ These 1904 resolutions were reiterated by Gokhale in his 1905 address to the National Congress. He stated there that Congress sought those reforms "which aim at securing for our people a larger and larger share in the administration and control of our affairs; these include a reform of our legislative councils, the appointment of Indians to the Secretary of States Council (in London) and the Executive Council in India, and a steady substitution of the Indian for the European agency in the public service of the country."¹⁹ However, beneath the surface of these specific suggestions, a changed attitude and approach soon appeared.

16. Gurmukh Nihal Singh, *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development, 1600-1919* (Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 116. Hereafter cited as Singh.

17. Singh, pp. 117-118.

18. Sitaramayya, p. 25.

19. Karunakaran, p. 37.

During the five year period from 1900 to 1905, the questions of the partition of Bengal and employment of Indians in the higher Civil Service dominated. The method of approach and handling these two issues by Lord Curzon had no small effect on the National Congress. Congress had been reaching out from the specific proposals of Gokhale in the 1880's to the widening of the perception of issues as noted in 1903 when Sir Henry Cotton, President of the National Congress, addressed his fellow members. "The ideal of an Indian patriot is the establishment of a federation of free and separate states, the United States of India, placed on a fraternal footing with the self-governing colonies, each with its own local autonomy, cemented together under the aegis of Great Britain."²⁰ The specific proposals of Congress were directed toward this end.

When in 1904, Congress emphasized employment of Indians in the Civil Service, Curzon's response constituted a focus on a symbolic issue that hardened feelings on both sides. Curzon intimated that British rule would be for a long time to come and repudiated hopes that Indians share in the administration of government.

The highest ranks of civil employment in India must as a general rule be held by Englishmen for the reason that they possess partly by heredity, partly by upbringing, and partly by education, the habits of mind and the vigour of character which are essential for the task; and that the rule of India being a British rule and every other rule being in the circumstances of the case impossible, the tone and standard should be set by those who have created and are responsible for it.²¹

This, coupled with the deep suspicion that Curzon's proposed partition of Bengal was to effect a demise of Bengali interests and articulation, made partition a symbol of Indian grievances and provoked a change in the tone and substance of subsequent Congress resolutions.

The introductory speech of the 1905 Congress set the tone. India was declared to be "distracted, discontented, despondent, the victim of many misfortunes, political and others"; the "cup

20. Argov, p. 103.

21. Argov, p. 105.

of national indignation had been filled to over-flowing by the Partition designed to break down the political power and influence of the educated opinion of Bengal."²² The combination of Curzon's racism and the evolution of Congress demands sustained a more symbolic resolution in 1906. Gokhale, in London, told Morley that the aim of Congress was self-government within the Empire.²³ In the 1906 Congress, Swaraj was mentioned for the first time in a presidential address and this loosely defined goal was posited as the object of Congress activities.²⁴ However, the question of whether agitation for self-government was to be outside or within the Government of India marked the divergence between the moderate and extremist factions of Congress.

The possible development of Indian Nationalism along uncompromising symbolic lines is indicated by statements in the Bengali newspapers. The *New India* wrote: "Absolute national autonomy is the goal. The Nation must succeed in gaining it or must perish in the attempt. Revolution is inevitable."²⁵ The *Yugantar* commented that war or revolution was far better than death in peace and it urged the Indians to draw inspiration from Japan's victory over Russia.

The transformation for many Congress leaders can be seen in the words of Bipin C. Pal.

We loved the abstraction we called India but hated the thing that it actually was. Our Patriotism was not composed of our love for our own history, literature, arts, industries, culture and institutions, but as a prototype of England which we wished her to be. The new spirit cured us of an imaginary and abstract patriotism. Love of India means a love for its rivers and mountains, for its paddy fields and its sandy lands, its towns and villages and poor people, for its languages, literature, philosophy, religion, culture and civilization.²⁶

When one juxtaposes the nationalist attachment to "mother India" with Gokhale's statement of commitment to western Liberalism,

22. Sir Verney Louett, *A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1968), p. 61.

23. Argov, p. 118.

24. Ram Gopal, *How India Struggled for Freedom* (Delhi, 1958), p. 168.

25. Argov, p. 118.

26. Argov, p. 122.

the degree of separation and transformation of issue perception from 1885 to 1905 is apparent. Although the years from 1905 to 1916 mark the most radical and violent opposition to British rule, neither the Anarchist movement nor the Extremist New Party faction fomented an Indian revolution. One key to this development is the British reaction to Congress's proclamation of home-rule and *swadeshi*.

On June 6, 1906, Morley wrote Lord Minto to the effect that informed Indian watchers were of the opinion that it was not possible "to go on governing in the same spirit; you have got to deal with the Congress Party and Congress principles."²⁷ As a first step, Minto in August of 1906 stated his objectives of possible reform: "(a) a Council of Princes, and should this be impossible, whether they might be represented in the Viceroy's Legislative Council; (b) an Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council; (c) increased representation on the Legislative Council of the Viceroy and of Local Governments; and (d) prolongation of the budget debate and increased power of moving amendments."²⁸ Instead of an emotional outburst which would match the emotional quality of Indian pronouncements, the British remained focussed on specific issues, and acknowledged Congress demands. That this did not have to be the course of British reaction is illustrated by the *Civil and Military Gazette*, a spokesman for the English in India.

We must hold the country with the power of the sword and in the interests of our women and children and the Empire. We must see that the edge of the sword is not dulled The only thing an oriental respects is power.²⁹

However, the Morley-Minto Reforms remained tied to specific issues, although they did raise the new issues of weightage with regard to Muslim representation.

Again the notable aspect of the Indian Councils Act of 1909 is the specificity of its provisions. The size of the Legislative Councils were enlarged, and additional members of the Governor General's Council provided. It was also provided that the Imperial Legislative Council would consist of 37 official and 32 non-official members.

27. Singh, p. 167.

28. Singh, p. 168.

29. Argov, p. 130.

This retained a substantial official majority for the Indian Government. The Act did not provide for official majority in the Provincial Legislative Councils, and it was in the Legislative Councils that the Indian realized the greatest gains. The majority of the members were to be non-officials. Although this did not mean elected majorities in the Provincial Council, the possibility of this development in the future was ensured. In the Legislative Councils, the functions of the Councils were increased. This included discussion of the budget and other financial matters. Members were allowed to ask any pertinent questions thought necessary, and to move resolutions. These would be in the form of a definite recommendation to the Government. In terms of local power, municipalities and other local government institutions were to elect members.³⁰

The development of the Congress mentality from loyal British subjects to the nationalism (albeit moderate) visible in Pal's statement wrested the initiative from the Government of India. With the proclamation of swaraj, and the inauguration of boycott and swadeshi, the British were faced with demands perhaps incompatible with their objectives. Hence, what were British objectives in India became the most crucial question for the Government of India. Congress wanted autonomy at least, absolute independence at most, and was being fast convinced that England was not really committed to either possibility. The moderates pinned their hopes on the Liberal victory in Parliament in England and the New Governor General and Secretary of State for India, Lord Minto and John Morley respectively. Just what were the goals and shades of political thinking of these two gentlemen has been the subject of considerable debate.³¹ The resolution of that interpretation, however, is not a purpose of this paper.

One clue to British reaction to a more militant Congress is the position of the aforementioned question and its answer by John Morley in 1908. "What are we in India for?" he challenged Minto. "Surely in order to implant—slowly, prudently, judiciously,—those ideas of justice, law, humanity, which are the foundation of our

30. R. R. Sethi and V. D. Mahajan, *Constitutional History of India* (Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1956), pp. 64-66.

31. M. N. Das, Syed Wasti, and Stanley Wolpert all provide interpretations of Morley and Minto.

own civilization."³² Whether the motivation for this statement, and for the 1909 reforms was to lay the frame work for final self-rule is immaterial. What is important is that the symbolic referent was not the glory of Empire, or the permanency of British rule, rather it was an outline that demanded specific issues be spelled out to accomplish such an aim. The compatibility of such an outline is demonstrated in the speech of the same year by Gokhale. He stated that Indians might gain provincial self-government in ten years and explained: "It is no use trying to overthrow the present administration before we have something to put in its place."³³

The result of the 1909 reforms had significance for the possibility of violent confrontation with the Congress party. Until 1909, Congress fulfilled the task of criticizing Government of India from without, and the Government regarded Congress as a body which articulated educated Indians' thoughts and demands. With the expansion of the Councils and Legislative Councils and the incorporation of many Congress members into these bodies, Congress no longer served the same function. Criticism now came from within the various organs of Government. This not only increased the specificity of the debates between the two, in terms of conflict resolution, this development greatly ameliorated the amount of hostility between Congress and the Government of India.

It was not that the Reforms did not arouse any reaction from Congress. As with partition, the Reforms created a new issue, "weightage." And Congress, while thanking the British Government for many of the provisions in the Reforms, expressed its unhappiness with the general tone of the reform (prejudicial to educated Indians) and with the weighted representation the Muslims received. But Congress ended the 1909 reform with a call for a reform of the reforms, quite a specific resolution.

32. Stanely Wolpert, *Morley and India 1906-1910* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

33. Argov, p. 142.

The Political Theory of India's Struggle for Freedom

BY

K. SHESHADRI

1. *An Apology*

It is rather presumptuous to pretend to weave a theory on a long and disjointed process which is what India's struggle for liberation was. It is a matter still unsettled among scholars of both historical and political persuasions, whether there was any 'theory' in political science in India at all, as compared to, say, Greece or Rome and later the Medieval Europe. India never had an Aristotle nor a Hobbes or any of the various political theorists of Europe who wrote on politics. Such of the political writings as have been handed down to us, are so interwoven into 'legal-ethical-religious' texture that informed all intellectual work in ancient and medieval India, (the latter's contribution in this regard being utterly negligible), that it is difficult to separate the political strand from them. According to the Hindu way of thinking, even scientific study of History was a fruitless venture and thus legend and mythology so hopelessly coloured the few traces of history that one does not know where history begins and mythology ends. It is only after the Muslim conquest of India, that we have the beginnings of a chronologically, though at times with lot of bias,¹ recorded list of events, which go by the name of history.

Ibn Khaldun's prodigious effort, the 'Universal History' has had no parallel in India. And where India excelled was in the speculative nature of their intellectual effort in which ethical and legal aspects formed an inseparable component. As a sort of obiter dicta, Sukra Nithi or Shanti Parva may give a few guidelines as to what political ethics should be; but they are far from political theoretical treatises. One may mention Artha Sastra as a deviant

1. It should also be noted that some historians like Khafikhan, for instance, wrote with an amazing sense of historical impartiality.

case, rather unique from the general Indian tradition, that discusses political-cum-economic questions with a refreshing air of independence from the influence of ethics and myths. Perhaps 'Kamasutra' is another in its field which, to some extent, takes an amoral stand, howsoever absurd and unscientific certain observations might be. On the basis of one Artha Sastra which is generally compared to Machiavelli's "Prince", (why one should seek solace and pride under such comparisons with things Western is rather unintelligible) to claim that India's political theoretical heritage is rich, would be rather unwarranted. If India did not have political theorists, well, she did not have them. She had other compensations. Why should Indian scholars labour hard to prove that the Indian political system was democratically informed as if democracy is the best form of government and any country that did not have it in its past is thereby condemned to be a backward country? Democracy is a value judgement and one needn't attach such importance to it, especially when reading a country's history.²

Hence it is, that if there was no political theoretical heritage that is indigenous to India, there is no question of its continuity when India's struggle for independence began. The very beginnings of this struggle itself cannot be correctly assessed, though some Indian historians have characterised the Indian Mutiny of 1857 as a struggle for independence.³ Whether or not it was fought on the basis of any patriotism and nationalism is a matter of doubt, though two things were certain—

(1) That the people in those days were loyal to their Kings and their Kings' battles were theirs and this loyalty also changed as easily when the Kings changed. Hence if the native rulers like Rani of Jhansi or Tantia Tope or Bahadur Shah Zafar revolted, their armies and their subjects were equally involved.

2. Eminent scholars like K. P. Jaiswal, Beni Prasad and K. S. Aiyangar tend to import some of the Western political categories into the ancient Hindu political systems. May be some type of democracy and some varieties of republics existed, but they are not of the same type as those contemplated according to the Western norms.

3. Only V. D. Savarkar characterised it as war of independence and wrote rather passionately than historically accurately about it. This was of-course done with a purpose.

(2) There was a general dislike of the beef and pork eating while the Feringhi ruling over the Indians coming from a far away country had no such feelings. In a rather unarticulated form patriotic sentiment was expressed in this dislike, though earlier the rise of Rajputs and Maharattas against the Mughuls was more distinct and articulate patriotic expressions. Even these risings were to establish the Hindu dharma.

Thus in the sense that Rousseau's 'Social Contract' and Voltaire's prodigious writings formed the ideological base for the French Revolution of 1789 or the writings of Locke formed the base for American War of Independence or Marx and Engels' writings led to further elaboration of Lenin's writings which formed the bases for the Russian Revolution. there was nothing that could be thought of as the basis for the Indian struggle for independence. The theoretical base for India's struggle was almost coeval with the birth pangs of the struggle for Indians' national identity and striving for liberty.

Another peculiar feature of India's struggle is the very nature of the struggle itself which qualitatively differed from similar struggles in other enslaved countries, though one must hasten to add here that many of these independence struggles all over the world gave Indians an inspiration and a moral strength. Thus the American War of Independence, the Sinn-Finn movement in Ireland, and the Russian Revolution did have their impact on the Indian patriots with different degrees of intensity at different times. Yet in the main, the struggle assumed a form where violent individual acts of terrorism, violent mass agitations, peaceful mass acts of protest and constitutionalism became components of a peculiar amalgum each one becoming a prominent feature at different stages in the whole movement. In America it was the same stock of people mainly, who revolted against the mother country on a rather constitutional issue that there should be no taxation without representation—a typical 'shop-keeper's' attitude. In the case of both French and Russian Revolutions again, it was the same people revolting against their ruling classes. All these are not strictly patriotic struggles, though they are struggles for democratic rights to start with. The Irish struggle was in a way a struggle of one country against another though even in this case,

England felt that Ireland was an integral part of Great Britain and representation in the British Parliament was given to the Irish even as the Scots and Welsh had it. But for the fact that there was a difference in the denomination of religions, Ireland might have got integrated with Britain even as Scotland and Wales did.

That way after the defeat of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the movement for self-determination of nations began to be recognised all over the West though struggles for national identification had to be waged much later. The whole concept of nationalism was getting crystallised in a gradual process, wherein people speaking the same language and professing similar culture divided into different empires began to feel a sense of solidarity breaking the boundaries and barriers set by empires. In this process, unification as evidenced in Italy under the inspiration and leadership of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour, and Germany under Bismarck's policy of 'blood and iron', and consolidation as in the case of Sweden under Gustavus Adolphus, and reshuffling of boundaries to satisfy the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians at a much later date, were all the different components. This process perhaps did not end with any finality as the reordering of boundaries in Europe again after the Second World War evidenced. As Bertrand de Jouvenal said, boundaries are the most perishable commodities in the world. All these examples are cited only to show that the struggle for independence in different countries took different forms, they went through the painful process of violent upheavals, wars, foreign interventions etc., for their ultimate resolution. Though President Wilson of the United States championed the cause of national self-determination to all nations, to the Western mind this principle was applicable only to the Western peoples. Be that as it may.

In India, there was no sentiment of nationalism, as such, in the beginnings though it is undeniable that Indians from Kashmir to Cape Camorin felt as one whole for ages inspite of there being certain measure of truth in the oft-repeated saying that India is a geographical expression. As in Europe, religion generally never interfered with politics as such in India. This needs a slight clarification. Except for giving advice to the Rajah or the Sultan, the purohit or the mullah, as the case may be, never interfered in

purely temporal matters as the Church did in medieval Europe. There was no organised Church which sought to indoctrinate people and interpret the Ruler's actions in terms of Christian theology and pass verdicts of condemnation or commendation.

All these facts have to be mentioned in order to show the historical fact that there was no traditional roots for any national movements in India that could immediately appeal to the people and recruit them to the movement. Such of the movements as India had were purely religious movements or cults like Buddhism or Vaishnavism which were completely free from political overtones and were not movements of revolt or rebellion in the political sense. Later on, the various movements of revolt by the Hindus against Muslim Rulers were more due to the religious frictions than for organised capture of political power. As long as the Muslim Rulers left the people alone in their religious worship, the people by and large acknowledged their sovereignty (even to the extent prescribed in Austinian jurisprudence) and never demanded any secular rights. Even the neighbouring Rajput princes waged only defensive wars when their territory was attacked. Thus the concepts of patriotism and struggle for liberation etc., were unknown to the people in general who were as indifferent to an alien rule as they were to an indigenous rule. Hence the task of communicating the imperative need for struggle for liberty is rather stupendous. This process of introducing the concept not only among the intellectual elite but also among the general masses of Indians is not a mean task since, as argued earlier, there were no such traditions in the country. Secondly, by the time this new consciousness got generated, the different groups and communities began to seek their identification and in the process their mutual interests were running counter to each other. It is against this back-ground that any theory of national struggle had to be developed and not by going into the roots of traditions as found in Sanskrit texts and Dharma Sastras. This is not to disparage the most scholarly attempts by P. V. Kane or B. K. Sarkar or Nilakanta Sastri etc., to dig into the past in pursuit of finding the line of continuity in the Indian political culture but only to demonstrate that whatever be the reality of the so-called continuing tradition, its influence on the political struggle was rather negligible. On the contrary, the influence of Western thought was much more

relevant. What was needed was a proper formula for adopting the Western concepts and fitting them with suitable Indian idiom and charging them with the sentiments of indigenous tradition.

2. *The Early Political Theories*

It is not the intention here to go through the historical development but only to see if those who were motivated of patriotism had any theoretical understanding for their acts of disobedience to a foreign ruler. From the battle of Plassey in 1757, there have been many uprisings throughout India against the British finally culminating in the Mutiny of 1857.⁴ As Tara Chand rightly pointed out, "It was not inspired by any positive creative idea; it did not entertain either the vision of a higher social order or of a higher political system. As it was an almost spontaneous episodic outburst, there was no stable well-ordered organisation behind the movement as a whole. It lacked plan, programme and funds. The only thing which united the rebels was the desire to eliminate foreign rule.....It was dimly perceived that Hindu-Muslim co-operation was necessary, but it was not realized that the nation was an organic unity, that no mere temporary co-operation of independent units was enough, and that a fusion of communities into a higher political organism alone could guarantee success against a modern power."⁵

Thus excepting vague notion among the feudal elements that a foreign rule which had deprived them of their privileges should be ended, there was no political understanding as such and even the concept of an Indian nation was not known. The ancient Hindu division of India into fifty-six nations had of course undergone a change, but among the masses of the people loyalty was more to the sovereign than to the nation. Even in Europe, it may be argued, that nationalism as a concept came into vogue after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. But it is to be noted, for example, that the British considered themselves as one people and continued to resist Norman rule. The Scotts rebelled against

4. For details see Tara Chand. "History of the Freedom Movement in India"—Vol. II. Publications Division, Government of India, 1967. pp. 1-107.
5. *Ibid*, pp. 106-107

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the English, the Dutch fought the French and so on, long before the Napoleonic wars. The ancient Athenians as a people had resisted the Persians with a feeling of pride in their citizenship of the City State. In India even the vagueness about political unity and national identity was non-existent though from times immemorial culturally, which included religion as well, India was deemed to be a 'Bharata Varsha'. But this unity and resilience is the most important dimension of our national character.

The British rule with its superior organisation, its scientific temper, its historical perspective and traditions of liberal thought indirectly helped to build in India a force that was to ultimately undermine the British rule itself. This is neither a great astounding truth nor is admission of this fact a point against Indian national self-respect, because the self same imperialist rule in other developing countries in Africa and South East Asia, for instance, did not produce any national consciousness till almost the Russian Revolution of 1917. Long before these people were awakened to national consciousness, India had developed a movement, a number of political philosophical thinkers. It is in this sense that India's freedom became the harbinger of national liberation struggles all over the world.

After the unsuccessful bid for driving out a 'White Foreigner', the responsibility of directing the political fervent begins to fall not on the forces that fought the British in 1857 and earlier, but on a new class of intellectual elite that formed the bridge between the rulers and the ruled. The British supremacy was accepted and the uniform administration it brought about throughout the length and breadth of the country enabled a free exchange of ideas among these intellectual elites and later on facilitated a co-ordinated mass action which was what was lacking in the Sepoy Mutiny, as noted earlier.

The political revolt was followed by a political lull and the self-same feudal elements who led the revolt against the British later on became their most trusted vassals and in that sense have become irrelevant to the development of a positive political process in the country. Hence the political role had to be performed by others who were intellectually equipped for the task. The first impact of modernisation that the British administration wrought and the results that flowed from Macaulay's famous minute on education was

on the Hindu middle classes since both the Hindu aristocracy and the general masses of Muslims kept themselves aloof from it⁶—the latter almost viewed English with contempt. The masses in general were also completely neglected in the scheme of education Macaulay contemplated. While critical of the mythological content that informed most of the works in the classical languages of India 'which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school', he was oblivious to many 'historical' incidents in the Bible that would move a country yokel in India to peels of laughter, though even the most scientifically advanced Westerner to this day believes in them. It is not to deny the role modern education played in shaping the Indian nation-hood in the subsequent period. But because of the 'filtration theory' advocated by the Anglicists⁷ the process of modernisation did not permeate into the nooks and corners of the land and thus paved the way for the ever-widening chasm between the elites and the masses in the country. It is in this light that the insistence at a later date by Gandhi for vernacularising education has to be viewed.

The impact of the new knowledge served to throw ample light on the dark crevices of the Indian society on the one hand and served to introduce a greater spirit of reverence to the profound thought content in the classical philosophies of India which was far superior to the superficial theology of the ruling classes. At purely philosophical level freed from the mythological references, they were comparable to the great non-Christian-theological philosophies of the West.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'when the Oriental wants to learn about machine-making, he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him. When the Occident wants to learn

6. See R. C. Majumdar, *et al*: 'An Advanced History of India', London 1958, p. 816-821.

7. It is a well known fact that at the time, i.e., in the first quarter of the 19th century the thinkers in both India and Europe were divided into two groups—Orientalists and Anglicists. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was opposed to Orientalists because he felt that oriental education would keep the people in darkness. The Anglicists admitted that English education would not reach all the people but would spread through the medium of the English-educated elite to the people at large. This was called the 'filtration theory'.

about.....the meaning and mystery of this Universe, he must sit at the feet of Orient to learn.⁸

We are now here concerned with the first aspect of it viz., the exposure of the disabilities in the society to scientific scrutiny as a result of the refreshing light that English education threw on them. It is here that Raja Ram Mohan Roy occupies a place of pre-eminence among modern Indian political thinkers—we use the term political thinkers quite advisedly because his quest for social reform was pregnant with political content. His depth of knowledge of both the modern and ancient learning enabled him to reinterpret the texts and show that the so-called new thoughts were not altogether unknown to the ancients. He struck at the root of social evils not by quoting English texts but by quoting the ancient texts. Tilak later on did a similar thing by reinterpreting the Bhagawad Gita and imbuing a political meaning to its message which was relevant to the contemporary period. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's struggle for the freedom of the press, his championing the cause of peasants against the Zemindars, his plea for the appointment of Indian Collectors in the place of expensive European Collectors, his petition against the July Act of 1827 which denied a place of honour to the Indians, his advocacy of Indianisation of the army, separation of the jury from the executive, etc., were all the precursors of the new political philosophy that was to shape the liberation movement in India. This spirit of intertwining social reform with liberation movement is one of the fundamental contributions to political theory in India starting from Raja Ram Mohan Roy and continuing upto Pandit Nehru's time. Leader after leader saw in the social disabilities a monstrous impediment to political and economic progress and when they were not involved in a direct action against the British Raj, they all turned their might and mien to remove them. In various regions, especially Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Andhra, there was a greater accent on social reform movements to integrate the Hindu society, remove untouchability, liberate women from bondage, infuse rational and scientific spirit etc., and the medium of vernacular languages proved effective. An out-and-out religious reformer like Swami Vivekananda wrote in Bengali language exhorting Indians to be

8. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV. Almora. p. 151.

proud of being Indians and to declare that the 'ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmen Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother'.⁹

3. *The Liberalist Philosophies of Nationalism*

Along with this social reform movement and the plea for 'Western' out-look came a sort of a militant revolt against the West which almost verged on xenophobia. Though the Mutiny and the subsequent revolts against the Whiteman's rule were characterised by an intense hatred of the foreigner—his colour, his religion, his habits and his arrogance, political articulation for freedom started with Ram Mohan Roy, who understood the British system and played the game according to their rules. Thus he is generally believed to be the forerunner of the constitutional struggle waged by the Liberals subsequently. Together with this, but rejecting the rules of the British game, came the extremist thinking which with all the hatred for the British that was characteristic of earlier revolts was based on a more scientific and clear understanding of the political process. It took inspiration from these sporadic and disorganised movements for all the acts of courage and love of the land they exhibited, but built its theory on a study of patriotic movements from the West. In their attempt to socialise the masses and involve them, they searched out methods which were more indigenous and hence more appealing than the rules of the constitutional game. The "filtration theory" of which we spoke earlier failed to penetrate deeper than the skin.

The Liberals for all their sympathy for the Indian masses failed to reach them and understand them. Since in the evolution of national struggle, the Liberal thinking came first, we shall examine the reason for this and then analyse their philosophy of political action. Then we shall proceed to examine how along with these liberal or moderate forces were born the extremists who advocated violent and forceful methods to eliminate the foreign rule. Coeval with this or perhaps even pre-dating it were the forces of minority separatism based on suspicion of the majority if the 'neutral' foreign rule were to be eliminated and democracy were to be established.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 412.

We may say that the forces of minority separatism began even during the agitation of the liberals because if as liberals argued, greater political participation were to be permitted to the natives, naturally by sheer numbers the majority of the Hindus would claim more power.

Generally whenever an enslaved nation fights for emancipation it does not resort to constitutionalism alone. It is at once a compliment to the nature of the British rule as well as the adaptability of the intellectuals of India to the new situation, that the struggle for independence in India took a constitutional form. It is also because the struggle was headed by the middle class intellectuals who took to English education and served in the British Government as their clerks, administrators, and brokers, they understood the nature of English ruling class and contrived to speak the language the rulers understood. Secondly, it is an undeniable fact that the British administration brought about a measure of stability and peace, which was rather unknown during the earlier princely rule whether it be Hindu or Muslim. For the first time the impersonal rule of law with all its concomitant factors like predictability, and equality was enforced and medieval arbitrariness was completely eliminated. In fact, as is well known, the seeds of national movement were sown by liberal Britishers themselves. Going back to the original rule of the Indian princes with all its tyranny and cruelty was completely out of the question, and hence even the most ardent patriot in India felt that British supremacy should continue while at the same time greater participation in the national affairs be provided for the Indians. It is also an important factor that quite a number of Englishmen themselves were in the beginning sympathetic to these moderate aspirations of the Indian leaders. The writings and speeches by Surendranath Banerji or Dadabhai Naoroji or even Gokhale are replete with sentiments of loyalty to the British Crown and in the name of British justice they appealed for greater freedom to the Indian masses. In all the thinking of the liberals, the Indian masses in general were not taken into serious consideration even though they make reference to them to demonstrate the nature of foreign rule and its exploitative character. Moreover, being intellectuals and having studied the liberal thought of the West, they devoted themselves to a great deal of introspection—to examine the Indian society and see that the inherent defects in the society were

eliminated before they craved for freedom. A country cannot be free with all the social disabilities prevailing in it. Most of these moderate leaders were scholars both in English as well as the Indian classical languages. While they observed the customs and habits of traditional Hindus, in their outward lives they were as Macaulay wanted—'English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.'

The introduction of English language brought about a fruitful dialogue and unity of action among all the intellectual Indians who were hitherto separated by linguistic, regional and sub-cultural and even religious barriers. This brought about a new political culture leading to the birth of a new political consciousness. The liberals, taking their origin from Ram Mohan Roy began assiduously to reform Hindu society and attacked all attempts at revivalism of Hindu religion. Mahadev Govinda Ranade challenging the revivalists' argument asks what in Hinduism is to be revived—the twelve forms of sons and eight forms of marriages, the *niyoga* system, the debauchery of the *rishis* and their wives, the *Shakti* worship with all its sacrifices including human sacrifice, polyandry and polygamy and so on ... "Besides, it seems to be forgotten that in a living organism, as any society is, no revival is possible. The dead are buried or burnt once for all, and the dead past cannot therefore be revived except by a reformation of the old materials into new organised beings."¹⁰

Together with this new spirit that was born among the Indian intellectuals to reform their society, pursue the policy of constitutional reformation as a result of the windows being thrown open to the Western thought, new fears and suspicions were generated among Muslim minority that they might lose in the competition with the more out-going Hindus. When English education was introduced and the process of reconciliation to the British rule was taking place, the Muslims, like Achilles were sulking in their tents, being too proud to accept the superiority of the Britisher and his language while at the same time too wounded to rise in militant revolt against the usurpers of their dominance. The burden of historical memory was pulling them back from joining the mainstream of politics in which they saw the hitherto servile Hindus

10. See Chintamani "Indian Social Reform" Part II, Madras, pp. 89, 90.

were participating in full vigour. This burden of historical memory has been haunting both the communities and still persists and influences not only the relationship between Pakistan and India adversely but also the feelings between Hindus and Muslims in India. The loyalty of the Muslim in India is always suspect in the eyes of the Hindu and the Hindu's political dominance in a democratic system by virtue of his majority has remained an irritation to the Muslim.¹¹ All talk of secularism by the Hindus sounds ambivalent to the Muslim. All that the Muslim could concede, is that India is a *darul aman*¹² and hence he need not be opposed to it or disloyal to it. Thus, from the very initial stages of independence struggle, the role of the Muslims—their fears, suspicions, aloofness, was a major factor to be reckoned with. It is an oversimplification to brush aside the whole thing as a creation of the British administration whose dictum was 'divide et impera'.

Though by and large an influential section of the Muslims kept themselves aloof from the main stream of independence movement, it has also to be borne in mind that quite a large number of Muslims did join not only national liberal movement but also the extremist, terrorist and later on the socialist and communist movements. Side by side with the new liberal spirit of the Hindus, Muslims also gradually realised the importance of new education as is evidenced by the institution of Aligarh Muslim University under the stewardship of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Apart from Sir Syed, Muhammed Iqbal, the poet, brought to bear a vigour in Muslim exclusiveness by rationalising the precepts of Islam to harmonise with scientific thinking. It is not the intention in this paper to go into the details of this deviant trend in the political theory of national struggle but only to point out how this factor influenced political thinking to a great extent, sometimes frustrating attempts at secularising and unitedly articulating the national aspiration.

11. See, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan "Akhari Madamin" and other tracts.

12. According to Islamic jurisprudence Darul Islam is a country which is governed by Koranic injunctions and no Muslim can rebel against it. Darul Aman is a country which is not governed by Koranic injunctions but they are respected. A muslim living in it is enjoined to be loyal. But Darul Harb is anti-Islamic state against which the Muslim has to fight.

4. *Extremists*

Extremism in India is a result of the smug attitude adopted by the British government towards the aspirations of the Indians. The protection of the minority Muslims also became an alibi for the British government's lack of response to India's demands. Since extremists, in which category the terrorists may also be included, rejected the stand of the Liberals, they had to find a theoretical basis in the indigenous traditions of the country and to interpret them in the light of contemporary situation. Going back to the traditional sources for theorising the patriotic struggle naturally meant interpreting the religious texts. As argued earlier, Indians, in particular the Hindus, had no political treatises as such nor did they have a sense of history. Such of the religious texts as would be suitable for political action were very few. Gita was perhaps the only book which provided the suitable source since it had the battlefield as its background and it sought to inspire the dis-spirited Arjuna into militant action to wipe out *adharma* from the land. In the divine scheme of things, man had to do his duty in furtherance of the divine will viz., fighting injustice, tyranny and wickedness. Atleast the Muslims who rebelled against the British dominance could find not only a historical justification but also invoke the teachings of Islam in which political theory is closely inter-woven with religious doctrine. It should be borne in mind that in the rise of Islam not merely religious conversion but also political action played a great role. Islam has a clear cut division of state into *Darul Islam*, *Darul Aman* and *Darul Harb* and people living in these states has definite duties towards the state. The so-called Wahabi movement which started prior to the Indian Mutiny and even inspired it, and continued till 1914 had declared British India as a *Darul Harb* against which a Mussalman was enjoined to fight.¹³ Some of the Muslim religious scholars of the Deoband School advocated joining hands with the Hindus in the task of driving out the British. What is contended here is that the Hindu masses did not have the benefit

13. It is a matter of doubt whether Wahabi movement could be termed as a national movement since it was aimed at re-establishment of Muslim rule in India. But in the sense that the Muslims were the rulers in India before the British occupied it, the re-establishment of the Indian rule albeit exclusively and dominantly Muslim rule has to be considered national in that, historical context. See Qahmed *The Wahabi Movement in India*, Calcutta, 1966.

of such clear-cut political philosophy on which they could base their call for struggle. Hence it is, that some of the revolutionary leaders had to create a theory using only some symbols that would inspire the people. They had also to take recourse to philosophies of revolt propounded in the Western countries. Thus the theories in the literature on French Revolution, writings of Mazzini etc., were intermixed with the Hindu religious texts. Not only the Gita but other symbols that would infuse courage and militancy like the "Shakti" were sought to be invoked. The writings of Aurobindo for instance in *Indu Prakash* are replete with militant exhortations to the Indians to awake and in the name of Motherland and God fight for deliverance. Rejecting the plea of the Moderate elements in the Congress as an attempt at flattery to gain the goodwill of the foreign rulers instead of relying on the inherent strength of the nation, he said that the work of national emancipation was a great and holy 'Yagna'.¹⁴ The partition of Bengal and the subsequent eruption of Bengali extremism gave rise to a veritable crop of revolutionary theorising. Writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee urged Bengalies to 'disanglicise' themselves. His *Ananda Math* became one of the first political novels inspiring the spirit of nationalism among the Hindus. The various terroristic activities were emotional outbursts displaying tremendous courage and self-sacrifice. To inspire such an abandon, a very powerful and passionate appeal was necessary and hence the religious or semi-religious appeals were made. But it was left to Tilak to base his revolutionary theory not on mere motive appeal but on terse logic of the Hindu classics. Tilak can be called the doyen of Indian extremists. He reinterpreted the message of Gita and organised political agitation by using the popular Hindu symbols and Ganapathi festivals.¹⁵ He was one of the most colourful personalities that the Indian

14. See Aurobindo, 'Speeches' Calcutta, Arya Publishing House, 1948 and also Karan Singh, "Prophet of Indian Nationalism", London, George Allen & Unwin, 1963.

15. There are quite a large number of books on Tilak including some by Westerners who were fascinated by his political personality. I. M. Keisner and N. M. Golaberg, (Eds) *Tilak and the Struggle for Freedom*, New Delhi, 1966, T. L. Shay, *The Legacy of Lokmanya*, S. A. Wolpent, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India*, Berkeley, 1962.

Freedom movement witnessed. He brought to bear his tremendous classical learning on his own philosophy of political action. He was rightly the 'Father of Indian Unrest' as the imprudent British Journalist Sir Valentine Chirol called him. Using his knowledge of the ancient classics and comprehending the weaknesses and strength of both the British administration and the Indian people he propounded the theory of boycott as a political weapon. To him Gita's message was a political message. He very clearly visualised that no empire was dissolved by a free grant of concessions by the rulers to the ruled. Power must be wrested from the unwilling hands of the rulers.

Both the Bengalis and Maharashtra extremists in their militancy advocated the policy of 'disanglicising' and usage of vernacular as powerful medium for mass education in their respective regions. This should not be mistaken for any attempt at sub-national identity, but has to be understood as the only alternative left for them in the absence of any other national language to communicate with the masses, once English was rejected as one of the symbols of India's bondage.

Certain political scientists have observed that the theories of the extremists, for all their anti-British tone, tended to become communal and anti-Muslim. Their invocation of the ancient texts, their usage of symbols, their fierce nationalism drove the Muslims away from them and made even the Congress movement suspect in their eyes. Tilak, especially, has been subjected to this criticism. Most of the other extremists like Lala Lajpat Rai and terrorists, like Chandra Sekhar Azad etc., have all been termed Hindu militants. In such characterisations, one has to go deeper than what just meets the eye. These men were dealing with large masses of ignorant people who were unaware of elementary patriotic obligations. They had taken the British dominance for granted and in accordance with the law of destiny suffered their grinding poverty and humiliation with a sense of abject resignation. Though the Muslims were also economically down-trodden in many places much more acutely than the Hindus, they had one thing in which they were superior—their unity and identity as a community in general and a memory of their supremacy in the sub-continent. The majority of the Hindus had neither modern knowledge nor pride in the past. It is to such

people that the message of freedom had to be carried and unless the leaders speak the idiom of the common people and use the symbols that they venerate it would be well nigh impossible to establish any communication between them and the elites. For mass mobilization proper techniques of mass-communication are essential and Tilak was the first to realize that unless there was mobilization of the people leading to their participation in the political struggle, nothing would come out of the few intellectual exercises that were indulged in by the Congress leaders. To do this Tilak exploited the memories of the glorious past, the memories of their common struggles and sufferings. It is in this light that his Ganapathi festivals become positively meaningful. He did not start them but he exploited these festivals where people congregated, to give them a political turn. To Tilak political action was the enjoined religious duty as Gita taught.¹⁶ Thus Tilak was the first Indian political leader who had formulated a political theory based on teachings of Gita interpreted to suit the times with an indigenous strategy for political action. He destroyed the intellectual notion that constitutional methods should be adopted to bring about political change but argued in favour of even forceful overthrow of a government whose moral foundation and legitimacy he had rejected. To minimise the distance between the masses and the intellectuals and to unite all the people in a programme of action by a realistic understanding of the existing conditions in the country and not by quoting Mill or Bentham without any relevance to the Indian situation, he undertook to write extensively in both his English and Marathi journals, 'Maharatta' and 'Kesari'. Thus Tilak was not only the father of Indian unrest but also the father of Indian theory of political struggle which in its essentials was to be continued by Gandhi.

Tilak's fearless upholding of violence when necessary was in conformity with the philosophy of Gita. Non-violence is after all not a Hindu creed and Tilak advocated boycott only as an alternative to violence since an unorganised people cannot defend themselves against a powerful enemy.

16. See G. D. Parik 'Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Humanist Review, July-Sept. 1970 for an excellent exposition of Tilak's ideas regarding the minorities, religious reform, etc.

5. *Gandhism*

It may be rightfully said that it was Gandhi who for the first time sought to evolve a political theory for national struggle in India. The uniqueness in Gandhian theory of national struggle, if we may call it so, is in its originality, indigenous character and its ethical content. It is a positive synthesis of the economic and social reform visualised by the Liberals in their purely legislative activities with the dynamic action programme for mass mobilization attempted by the extremists. Unlike the Machiavellian way of thinking of politics as amoral or trying to rationalise many an unscrupulous act as a part of the *realpolitik*, and hence not to be condemned severely, which is what contemporary political scientists heavily influenced by the American political theorists are trying to do, it sought to give a positive moral and economic direction to political activity.

The influence of this American political models on Indian thinkers forms a distinct subject in itself that deserves to be very carefully examined. It is not the purpose of this paper to go into this aspect.

The way Selig Harrison's book 'India, The Dangerous Decades' was given an undue and disproportionate prominence by the Western thinkers and their Indian counterparts bears a clear testimony to the possibility of arriving at very misleading and sometimes dangerous conclusions, if a mechanical application of political models and methodology relevant in the American context is made in India. It would be too obvious a statement to say that Indian political development must be interpreted through the usage of concepts that are indigenous and certain courage and self-confidence are the essential requisites or this liberation. This liberation need not necessarily mean putting the clock back when political scientists were preoccupied only with constitutionalism and historians with listing of chronological events, it calls, for coming to grips with the real problems facing the country and entering into meaningful debate as to what political scientists should do in order to help political policy making and socio-economic planning.

The importance that was previously accorded to Tilak and his thoughts arises out of the fact that he was the first in a way to think of political action with a refreshing originality free from the Mill-Bentham jargon, but relevant to the context of the times and

the peoples. It is in this tradition that the role of Gandhi has to be viewed—a tradition with deep roots in the country absorbing the rich thoughts from the Western nations and synthesising them to suit the challenges of the Indian society which was essentially traditionalistic at its core. Tilak and after him Gandhi understood very clearly that to mobilise the people to action Indian philosophical tradition, Indian national character and the folk symbols have to be properly used and in so using them they also had taken into consideration the regional variations. Tilak used the Marathi medium for speaking to the people and Gandhi also used Gujarati language to communicate to the Gujarati masses. Thus the efficacy of using the vernacular language to communicate with the masses was realised by them.

Gandhi as is well known derived his inspiration from Tolstoy, Ruskin and Waldo whose teaching he blended with his own understanding of the philosophy of Gita, his knowledge of the India's national psyche, so to say, and evolved out of this a course of action wherein the means adopted to achieve his goal were to be as noble as the goal itself. He was thus trying to synthesise in his political philosophy the rich heritage of his own country's ethical and spiritual values with the philosophy of rightful protest as preached by the Western minds. This is very important because in India there has been no indigenous tradition of fighting for civil rights and carrying out a revolution or revolt against constituted authority howsoever tyrannical it might be. The semi-political *obiter dicta* that are found in the epics of the Hindus deal with how a good prince should behave and uphold *Dharma* and certainly not how a prince should somehow try to maintain his authority by whatever means available as Machiavelli was advocating. Hence it is that Kautilya's Arthashastra is peculiarly untypical of Hindu political thinking. There is not even the Hobbesian justification of absoluteness of the ruler or the state, though in effect what was obtaining in the country till the British established the rule of law was more or less Hobbesian tempered by the soothing all-pervasive influence of *Dharma* or the Shariat as the case may be. Gandhi was operating in a country where the bulk of the population did not know their rights to self-rule and such of those as knew it were Western educated elites who either followed the more convenient path of constitutionalism and bargaining or the hazardous

and doubtful path of extremism. Both of these in a way did not count with the masses and the importance of mobilising them for action while simultaneously educating them about their own inherent right to breathe the air of freedom had to be stressed. Many terrorists by their reckless courage had sacrificed their lives to liberate the country but that had no effect on the masses as such most of whom did not even perhaps understand what it was all about. They kept themselves aloof as admiring on-lookers at best and indifferent cynics at worst. The Liberals confined their activities only among the urban people and that too among the intellectual elites. As mentioned earlier it was Tilak who tried to approach the masses and even he did not reach the mass of people who lived in rural areas. The unique nature of Gandhian struggle is the drawing into the vortex of struggle the peasantry in villages and the workers in both factories and even plantations. Champaran Satyagraha led by him was by the plantation workers. In this respect Gandhi was like Lenin who devised new techniques of struggle.

Even in adopting and devising these techniques of struggle Gandhi borrowed from indigenous ways of resisting the government, though he did acknowledge his debt to Thoreau's article on 'civil disobedience'. These techniques which Gandhi adopted were said to have had their origin in the methods prevalent in Saurashtra from where he hailed. The people of Saurashtra whenever they were aggrieved by the ruler's misconduct adopted three methods:

(1) *Traga* was a self imposition of pain to express righteous indignation.

(2) *Dharna* was bringing of moral pressure on the oppressor by squatting before the oppressor's house and fasting, and

(3) *Baharvatiya* was a method according to which the rebel outlaws himself and attacks the officials in order to make the people realize that the King's writ does not run.

One can easily see in the various struggles that Gandhi launched, traces of these traditional methods of resistance to authority which had ceased to have a moral sanction and hence in the Gandhian spirit legal sanctity. But in all these the central theme was

non-violence and truth which to him were creeds and not mere tactics. This is where he differs with Lenin to whom tactics were different from creeds and to attain the latter there was always room for change in tactics. If ends justify the means, Gandhi would say ends are means since both are moral. Only when people are moral, truthful and non-violent can they attain Swaraj and Ram Raj which to him was almost synonymous with socialism—Gandhi styled himself a socialist. If morality informs all actions and struggles, there is no defeat because even in physical defeat the Satyagrahi is the moral victor since immorality can gain only a momentary victory over morality and such a victory is no victory. If the government is moral, there can be no contradiction between the ruler and the ruled. No foreign government howsoever good it might pretend to be, is not morally justifiable and hence in the final analysis immoral and illegal. A good government is no substitute for self-government, as Gandhi maintained. If the struggle is itself informed by morality then all actions after victory is won will have to be moral. One who follows the path of the morality which in quintessence is truthfulness and non-violence, there is no place for the two evils of cowardice and hatred to exist.

Gandhi viewed political action not in its isolation but as an important part of the whole gamut of activities in the economic, social and cultural fields. To him winning of independence was linked up with Harijan uplift, Hindu-Muslim unity, vernacularisation, removal of social disabilities, cleanliness, Panchayat Raj, Village uplift, uplift of women, economic self-sufficiency, upholding the cultural values and heritage of the country, etc. For the first time a political theory views all these aspects as components of an organic whole and all of them were woven by the thread of truth and nonviolence. As a result of this style of his politics he converted the Congress Party into a movement and not a party in the strict sense. That is to say, he opposed polarisation of issues by calling himself a socialist among socialists, a sanatan Hindu among Hindus, a unifier of Hindus and Muslims, iconoclast who demolished caste system, untouchability and such other traditional disabilities which he considered to be in the way of his struggle. This style did give the Congress Party an eclectic colour at best and an ambivalence at worst which still persists. The dread of

cowardice was almost an obsession with him and he felt it was a part of the Hindu psyche. All his actions and preachings were aimed at the removal of cowardice. A person who upholds truth has no fear of fear. The 'Charkha' became the overall spinning symbol of this progress of a backward, colonial and timid people towards a new transformation into an independent, self-reliant, fearless, truthful and virile nation.

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into the details of Gandhian philosophy and economics but only to indicate the fact for the first time a comprehensive political theory was propounded which is at bottom in consonance with India's indigenous tradition and culture but has assimilated in itself the theories of the West. It was a sort of a compromise between tradition and modernity, both of which Gandhi in a peculiar way championed. The same fusion of seeming opposites characterise many of his actions. While not being a four-anna member of the congress, he was still its centre. While upholding democracy, he demanded absolute discipline and unity of action among the diverse elements that composed the leadership of the various parts of the country voicing divergent view points. It was perhaps the amazing elusive quality of his personality that baffled both the British and Jinnah but endeared him to the masses as the 'Mahatma'.

There are so many competent writings on the various facets of Gandhism that this exercise would be only superfluous and shallow. That there are equally competent and rich criticisms of Gandhian theory does not alter the fact of the strength of his theory and the fact of its influence to a very great extent upon the struggle of India for independence. Just as every post-Marxian theory of economics makes Marxism a point of reference so also every political theoretician in India as well as abroad, makes Gandhism a reference point and from there on goes to uphold it or criticise it or partly uphold and partly criticise it. From Communists and Royalists to communalists and traditionalists everyone had to contend with the force of Gandhian 'unlogic'.

The various sections of Socialists, Communists and others had all rallied round Gandhi agreeing with him on the main objectives of winning independence by defying the British, mobilising the masses for action, awakening them to the economic and social

exploitation to which they were subjected, though they had their own concrete differences with him on various other counts. Even his own successor, Pandit Nehru, differed with him though Gandhi maintained that Nehru would speak his language after his death. His theory of trusteeship, his uncompromising stand on non-violence which went to the extent of his condemning the activities of terrorists, the militant stand of Subhas Chandra Bose, the R. I. N. Ratings' strike, his opposition to legitimate strikes by industrial workers in various places are all of questionable validity even if judged according to his own principles. In international affairs though he kept himself aloof he was not insensitive to the fact that the world was shrinking and international interdependence would be inevitable in the emerging new age. Even there he felt that political action should have morals and principles. Hence it is that he supported the cause of democracy against Nazism and Fascism though he was himself struggling with the British, who were on the camp of democracy. If democracy should triumph as a principle, as a way of life, the British government also should give up its imperialist ambitions and grant independence to India so as to permit her as a free and democratic nation to participate in the war against fascism with the full support of her people. To this end he was prepared to negotiate with the British. Thus at the conference tables as well as in the streets, factories and fields he carried the struggle with a disarming freedom from hatred but with the relentlessness of a hard-boiled revolutionary.

His theory of democracy extends to the last unit of community life since to him democracy was a way of life and was quite indigenous to India's rural life as exemplified in the ancient village panchayats or the rural republics as he called them. He visualised a democracy which is not vitiated by uncompromising opposition but enlivened by active and positive participation of all people in the community. Out of a few houses a representative and out of those, a representative body for the village, out of a few villages a representative for a district and so on upto the national level was the sort of a structure he visualised for the country. This would prevent the community from being torn apart by parties, factions, castes and religions. Thus the Sarvodaya theory was developed. Jayaprakash Narayan's idea of Communitarian society is a further extension of Gandhi's seminal

ideas on decentralised society. All these may be very idealistic, visionary and out of tune with the times.

Pandit Nehru who spanned both the pre-independence struggle era and the post-independence developmental era tried to synthesise Gandhism and socialism; tried to bridge the gap between heavy industrialisation and rural small-scale industrialisation, tried to link representative big democracy with decentralised grass-root democracy, and in the field of international relations compromise rightful use of force with peaceful coexistence and settlement of disputes. M. N. Roy starting as a Marxist and a trenchant critic of Gandhi travelled far towards the last days of his life and arrived at humanism. Though he rejected the traditionalism of Gandhi, the religious outlook on life which stagnated Indian society and advocated rationalism, basically his approach to social problems were near Gandhian inasmuch as he too advocated decentralisation of power and organised democracy and establishment of a moral order. "Any effort for reorganisation of society must begin from the unit of society—from the root, so to say".¹⁷ But Roy's thought remained unrelated to the main-stream of India's politics.

Contemporaneous with Gandhi and Gandhian political thinkers mention must be made of the socialist and communist political theorists, though from the point of originality and applicability of theory to the political culture of the country, so to say, their contribution has not been significant. For a long time both the groups, socialists and communists, worked together and tried to apply the Marxian theory to the Indian situation. They were incapable of assimilating the Marxian thought and properly interpreting it to suit the Indian situation. This needed a deeper understanding of the culture of the Indian society which they seem to have lacked. Either they ended as camp followers of Gandhian leaders or became totally alienated from the people as most communists became. They lacked the original thinking and an understanding of the people of India to link those ideas meaningfully by a theory. This is precisely what Mao Tse-tung did in China. Though he was essentially a Marxist-Leninist he could propound an original theory of struggle most suited to the objective conditions

17. See his *New Humanism: A Manifesto*, Calcutta, 1947 for details.

obtaining in his country. Even G. Adhikari, the most outstanding theoretician that the communists could boast of, came out with a poor version of the theory of nationalities after unsuccessfully trying to support the demand for Pakistan and Sikhistan. Originally, misguided by their over-enthusiasm to support and win the minorities, the communists supported Jinnah and also the Sikh separatists. Punjab, said Adhikari, was the homeland of Sikhs. After a time this was sought to be replaced by a "new" theory of sixteen nationalities in India. This was nothing but giving the linguistic provinces a grand name of nationalities *a la* Soviet Union. But all these pseudo-theories did not produce any mass action and whatever mass mobilisation that the communists could accomplish was in their leading the working classes and the peasantry in their economic struggles. Even these were in the conventional communist fashion rather than according to any original theory. They failed to accomplish the task of politicalising the economic struggles except in small isolated pockets.

There has been no dearth of theoreticians in the pre-independence India but most of their thoughts have not been systematically and coherently argued out. True it is, that most of them were not political philosophers mainly but men of action leading agitations and speaking to people. Only when in gaol, men like Nehru wrote anything, if at all and even then Nehru tried to run away from it all either to have a glimpse of World history or to discover India. Even such an excellent and analytical mind like that of Rajaji's also did not produce any coherent treatise on politics, except for occasional articles. One has only to gleam through the various writings in different journals or papers by some of the intellectuals among the Indian leaders to churn out a political theory.

After independence, there has been a significant growth in intellectual activity and political theory came to be more meaningfully linked with socio-economic development. With the ushering in of planning a grasp of the proper linkages between the different systems within the country, social, political, economic, cultural, etc., as well as international, has been attempted. There has also arisen a great danger from pernicious and shallow theory-building mostly undertaken by some American political scientists and their Indian imitators who paint a distorted and fragmented picture of

India's basic unity and resilience. They reject the historical context of the whole Indian nationhood and indulge in superficial theorisation based upon a pseudo-scientific interpretation of soft behavioural data acquired through means of doubtful validity. We are told, for instance, that these are dangerous decades, that our caste system is asserting itself as a result of the participatory democracy and that the country awaits to be fragmented by the struggle for regional and linguistic identity. These theories need not be taken into serious consideration though they may serve to point out certain tendencies at the micro-level.

There is now need for thinking in terms of political theories that would take the socio-economic goals set before the nation into consideration and link them up with appropriate political structures and methods so as to achieve national goals of social change, national consolidation and national self-reliance both economic and military. The impact of administration and the need for a new outlook in the face of new challenges facing the country, the compulsions of international relations, the absorption and adoption of scientific and technological knowledge are all germane to the new thinking. It is a very idle exercise to go on discussing about parliamentary democracy or constitutionalism in the present context; as they perhaps were even during the context of our struggle for freedom. This does not mean doing away with democracy. On the contrary to a great extent, economists in the country have exhibited a great awareness of the national need for performance. This paper is an attempt to place this need for a proper political theory in the historic perspective.

Netaji and The Nazis: a Study in their Relations

BY

ARUN COOMER BOSE

Although a couple of rather reliable personal accounts are there dealing with the activities of the Indian nationalists in Germany during the Second World War, this interesting topic has hitherto escaped the serious attention of any researcher. This essay — as the title suggests — is a study in relations, and is based solely on available printed sources and written statements of some highly-placed Germans¹ and Indians² who were closely associated with the decisions and considerations that form the theme of this paper.

1. Late Dr. Wilhelm Keppler, former Secretary of State of the Third Reich, interviewed at Hamburg on 17-8-1957.

Dr. Kurt Assmann, a Calcutta-born businessman entrusted with liaison work between the German Foreign Office and the Indians, interviewed at Hamburg on 18-8-1957.

Colonel Krappe (Retd.), formerly the chief of the Azad Hind Fauj in Europe, interviewed at Hanover on 20-8-1957.

Capt. Kutscher (Retd.) of the Azad Hind Fauj and later a judge of the Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic of Germany, interviewed at Karlsruhe on 23-8-1957.

Dr. Heinrich von Trott zu Solz, brother of Adam von Trott zu Solz, interviewed at Bebra near Hanover on 21-8-1957.

Dr. Ludwig Alsdorf, Professor of Indology, University of Hamburg and one-time personal assistant to Netaji in Germany, interviewed at Hamburg on 19-8-1957.

Late Dr. Helmuth von Glasenapp, formerly Professor of Indology in the Universities of Königsberg and Tübingen, interviewed at Tübingen on 25-8-1957.

2. Dr. A. C. N. Nambiar, the then Indian Ambassador in Germany, interviewed at Bonn on 10-8-1956.

Dr. Girija Mukerjee, the then Press Attache to the Indian Embassy at Bonn, interviewed there on 10-8-1956.

Dr. Tarachand Roy, teacher in the Department of Hindi, University of Bonn, interviewed there on 11-8-1956.

Dr. P. K. Dhavan, a practising physician and one-time member of the Free India Centre, interviewed at Hamburg on 17-8-1957.

Indian nationalists usually had a rather ambivalent attitude towards Germany, whether under the Hohenzollerns or the Nazis. To the educated among them Germany was the home of savants like Goethe and Schopenhauer—both great admirers of India's literary and philosophical heritage—and the leading centre for Indological studies, where—as many fancied—Max Muellers and Paul Duessens crowded the narrow streets of the university towns. To the ardent Indian nationalists Germany was the strongest opponent of their common enemy, and they naturally looked to her for help and encouragement. In Germany too there were people who sought to weaken Britain during the First World War by helping the Indian revolutionaries in creating trouble in their country³.

Still, the Indian nationalists, with their attachment for decorum and decency found the aggressive militarism and racial arrogance of modern Germany rather distasteful. The Indian National Congress never expressed any sympathy or admiration for the Kaiser's Germany. The great Tilak after his release from gaol in 1914 exhorted his countrymen to support British war effort,⁴ while Gandhi toured the country recruiting soldiers for the empire in its hour of need. Even Lajpat Rai, who was mostly in the U.S.A. during the First World War, twice refused invitations to go over to Germany to guide Indian revolutionary effort from Berlin.⁵

Twenty years later the Nazis were in power in Germany. They were too steeped in the belief in their racial superiority

3. Gen. Frederich von Bernhardi, in his book, *Germany and the Next War*, published in 1911, first spoke of utilising the Indian revolutionaries against Britain. During World War I, an agreement was arrived at between the German Government and the Indian revolutionaries in Germany, and efforts were made to supply money and arms to the latter's comrades at home, and to persuade the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India.

4. Tilak's statement on 27-8-1914, cited in Stanley A. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale*, (University of California, 1962), pp. 264-65.

5. Letter, dated 13-7-1916, from the German Foreign Office to Chandra Chakravarty in file No. 43253 with No. 5784, vol. 1542 of 1918. Also, Chakravarty's reply in file No. 16027 with 57894, vol. 1542 of 1918.

(The above files of the Justice and Public Dept. are in the former India Office Library, London.)

Also, V. C. Joshi (Ed.), *Lajpat Rai: Autobiographical Writings*, (Delhi, 1965), pp. 201-02 and 216.

and historic mission to have any interest in India's rich heritage. The Germany of their dreams, the *lebensraum* of the *herrenvolk*, was to expand into the heart of Russia, and India hardly figured in their immediate political or strategic calculations. All that they cared to know about India was that—though ruled by the British—her leaders usually disliked their aims and methods. That made them all the more indifferent to the four hundred million Indians and their aspirations.⁶ Indian nationalists too were not only the inheritors of the great cultural traditions of their country but had been considerably influenced by the world outlook and ethical approach of Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru. Naturally they found the unscrupulous expansionism and arrogant racialism of the Nazis positively repulsive. At home they were fighting for individual liberty, democratic rights and social justice and therefore, could not wish well of a system or power that stood for their ruthless suppression.

Still, there were among them men, like Subhas Chandra Bose, who believed that foreign help was essential to their armed struggle against the British *Raj*, and that it was possible to secure effective help from Germany or her allies without in any way sharing or supporting the darker aspects of their policies. He believed like Palmerston that a nation's foreign relations should be based on its own interests and not on sentiments and prejudices.⁷ If Indian independence required a friendly understanding and cooperation with the hated Axis Powers, he was prepared to

6. N. G. Ganpuley, *Netaji in Germany* (paperback, Bombay, 1959), p. 23. Also, statements of Keppler, Glasenapp and Alsdorf.

7. (a) While founding the All-India Forward Bloc, he said that he had planned the launching of "an uncompromising struggle with British Imperialism for winning independence. To this end all possible means should be employed and the Indian people should not be hampered by any philosophical notions like Gandhian non-violence or any sentimentalism like Nehru's anti-Axis foreign policy".

(b) To Nehru also he wrote on 28-3-1939, "Foreign policy is a realistic affair to be determined largely from the point of view of a nation's self-interest It is no use championing lost causes all the time, and it is no use condemning countries like Germany and Italy....."—J. L. Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (London, 1958), p. 334.

(c) In another context he wrote, "The issues involved are not those of principle but of expediency, and the standpoint from which I judge such issues is entirely realistic,—*Modern Review*, (Calcutta), August, 1938.

have these. He was in Europe more than once in the thirties, and was full of admiration for the unity, efficiency, discipline, and sense of purpose that he saw in new Germany and Italy. Those virtues, he felt, were India's need of the hour. But at the same time he was extremely critical of the racial arrogance and expansionist ambition of the Nazis, and never made any secret of it.⁸

It is not known whether Bose had any meaningful contact with the German or Italian leaders in course of these visits. But it is believed that after the Munich Pact he had secret meetings

(d) Addressing a gathering in Tokyo in June 1943 he said, "All revolutions have succeeded only with outside help".—*References to Activities of Indians in Japan and Occupied Areas*, (Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, No. 2702 A, November 16, 1944), p. 5.

8. (a) In an interview with R. Palme Dutt in London in January 1938, he admitted that in his book, *The Indian Struggle*, he had spoken of Fascism with approval because the latter's expansionist role was not known at that time.—*The Daily Worker* (London), 24-1-19389.

(b) He wrote to Dr. Thierfelder, Director of the German Academy for Foreign Relations at Stuttgart, on 24-3-1936, "Today I regret that I have to return to India with the conviction that the new nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish but arrogant the present atmosphere in Germany is rather disappointing for us After the (recent Munich) speech of Herr Hitler, I have issued a very strong statement to the Indian press which I hope will be published in due course I am still prepared to work for an understanding between Germany and India. This understanding must be consistent with our national self-respect. When we are fighting the greatest Empire in the world for our freedom and for our rights, and when we are confident of our ultimate success, we cannot brook any insult from any other nation or any attack on our race or culture I am an optimist and I hope that the present atmosphere will change and we shall ultimately arrive at an understanding". Then he added in post-script, ".... the above represents not only my personal views but also the views of Indian nationalists in general. I have no objection if you forward a copy of this letter to any friends or to any state department in order to inform them about the Indian attitude to Germany"—

H.O. Guenther, *Indien und Deutschland—Ein Sammelband*, (Frankfurt on Maine, 1956), pp. 154-56.

(c) He wrote in *The Forward Bloc* of 13-3-1940, "Germany may be a Fascist or an Imperialist power, ruthless or cruel, but one cannot help admiring these qualities of her Could not these qualities be utilised for promoting a nobler cause".

(d) Earlier he had written in *The Forward Bloc* of 28-8-1939, "It would be correct to say that if war broke out between Germany and Poland, the sympathy of Indian people would be with the Poles".

with the German Consuls at Calcutta and Bombay in the autumn of 1938.⁹ Thereafter he placed before Nehru his plans for the utilisation of Axis help during the war, which he expected would break out within a year. Nehru, the anti-Fascist, would have no truck with the hated Axis Powers.¹⁰ It is suspected that reports of these clandestine contacts made Gandhi oppose Bose's candidature for Congress Presidentship at Tripuri in 1939.¹¹

What actually transpired between Bose and the German Consuls may never be accurately known, but it is clear that the German Government did not take a serious note of his overtures. Else, why was he keen on going to Soviet Russia, after his escape from India, and why could he not make any contact with the German Embassy at Kabul, even when he needed their help?¹² In fact, the latter sent to Berlin a rather unfavourable report about him, suggesting that he was probably a British spy.¹³

Here one may pause to ponder over the question, why was Bose so keen on reaching either Russia or Germany. The reason was that he had failed to convince the Congress high command that England's difficulty was India's opportunity, and that they should seek help from England's enemies and start organising the people for an armed rising. What the Congress refused to do he took upon himself as his sacred task, and began that lonely trek that took him first to Berlin and then to Tokyo. He believed

9. Statement of the former revolutionary leader, late Pratul Ganguly cited in A. K. Majumdar, *The Advent of Independence*, (Bombay, 1963), p. 155. Also, K. M. Munshi's letter to A. K. Majumdar, dated 9-12-62, quoted in the above book, p. 409.

10. Bose wrote in *The Forward Bloc* of 11-5-1940. "In October 1938, we began to talk publicly about the impending war-crisis in Europe". The Bengal Provincial Conference meeting at Jalpaiguri in February 1939 suggested giving an ultimatum to British Government on the issue of independence. When brought before the Tripuri Congress it was rejected.

Also, J. N. Sahni, *The Lid Off*, (Delhi, 1971), pp. 138-39.

11. A. K. Majumdar, p. 409.

12. Both Uttam Chand Malhotra, Netaji's host at Kabul, and Sisir Kumar Bose (presently Director, Netaji Research Museum, Calcutta), Netaji's nephew who drove him by car from Calcutta to Gomoh in Bihar during his escape from India, confirm that he did not have any secret understanding with any foreign power or its representatives before leaving home.

13. Girija Mockherjee, *Europe At War*, (Meerut, 1968), p. 244.

that from Russia or Germany he would be able to carry out an effective wireless propaganda directed to his countrymen,¹⁴ and if only fifty thousand Axis troops could appear near the Indian frontier — Soviet Russia in those days was an ally of Germany — Indian soldiers would desert their alien masters *en masse*.¹⁵ He believed that the sight of a few units of Indian prisoners of war fighting at the head of the advancing Axis forces, under their own tricolour flag, would ensure not only the rapid disintegration of the British-Indian Army but also an armed rising by the general public.¹⁶ Moreover, he believed like many others that Germany would win the war, and at least one senior Indian leader should be there to earn their goodwill and, to influence post-war negotiations in India's favour.¹⁷ If however, a small army could be created out of the Indian prisoners and a national revolt could be stirred up, the victors would be naturally thankful to Indians for such assistance, and would respect them for having fought for their own freedom. Besides, that would have a sobering effect on those in Germany who might dream of keeping India under their control.¹⁸

However, when Bose reached Berlin on 3 April 1941 with an Italian passport issued at Kabul and the alias Orlando Mazzota, the Germans flushed with victory and sure of success cared little for the possible cooperation of a subject people.¹⁹ The Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, was glad that an eminent Indian was available for their anti-British propaganda. But the Secretary of State, Wilhelm Keppler, and most of the senior officials of the German Foreign Office were in the beginning rather cynical about him. Even if he was no British spy, what influence could he still have over Indians after having openly fallen out with

14. The Italian Ambassador, Quaronni's report from Kabul, dated 2-4-1941, quoted in *The Indian Struggle*, op. cit., p. 416.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Statements of Keppler, Alsdorf and Nambiar,

17. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 196-97, 231-32.

18. Statements of Nambiar, Tarachand Roy and P. K. Dhavan.

19. Girija Mookerjee, p. 198. Ganpuley, pp. 29-32. Also, statements of Glasenapp, Alsdorf and Heinrich von Trott zu Solz (hereinafter referred to as Heinrich Trott).

20. Statements of Heinrich Trott and Kurt Assmann.

Gandhi and other Congress leaders?²¹ In fact, for a couple of months after his arrival he was treated rather like an honourable prisoner. His presence and identity were not disclosed even to the local Indians, the police shadowed him constantly, and even his telephone was tapped.²² For some time it appeared as if coming to Germany was for him a mistake.

Bose, however was not the man to lose heart or to play another's game. He was very sensitive about the honour of his country and the cause he represented, and took special care never to do anything or to appear as a stooge of the Axis Powers. Within a week of his arrival in Germany he submitted to their Foreign Officer a memorandum (9 April) wherein he insisted on the following: Indo-German cooperation to be on equal terms, as between two governments; Indian independence to be recognised by Germany; and the status of an independent government to be accorded to the organisation which he was planning to set up with the help of the locally available Indians.²³ In his first meeting with Ribbentrop at Vienna on 29 April he personally requested him for an early German declaration in support of Indian independence, and made it clear to him that Indians should never be expected to support the actions and ideology of the German Government.²⁴ He also suggested that all German financial assistance should be in the nature of loans to be repaid later. (It may be pointed out that in 1944 he actually paid 500,000 yens to the German Ambassador in Tokyo out of the contributions made by the Indians in Japanese-occupied territories as a token repayment of the loans received.)²⁵ In fact, Bose viewed his war-time collaboration with Germany as something strictly limited to fighting Britain for Indian independence, and insisted that the proposed Indian legion should never be used against any other power or

21. Malcolm Muggeridge (Ed.), *Ciana's Diary*, (London, 1947), p. 355 Also, Girija Mookerjee, 244.

22. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 198 and 244. Also, statements of Tarachand Roy and P. K. Dhavan

23. As cited in *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, pp. 420-22.

24. Dr. D. Weidemann, "Revealing Facts on Netaji", *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 2-11-1967.

25. Ganpuley, p. 38. Also, Alexander Werth and Walter Harbich, *Netaji in Germany*, (Calcuta, 1970), p. 19.

people.²⁶ (As the Azad Hind Sarkar in South-East Asia declared war on Britain and the U.S.A. on 23 October 1943, their troops in Europe were used against the Anglo-Americans in France in 1944-45 but never against any other power or any popular resistance movement)

Obviously, Bose's constant assertion of independence and complete equality was not to the liking of many German officials, particularly the Nazi fanatics who under Goebbels controlled the Ministry of Propaganda and Broadcasting.²⁷ But the professionals in the Foreign Office gradually changed their views about him and India's importance in the war. The first to come under the spell of his charismatic personality was Adam von Trott zu Solz. A graduate of Oxford University—where he was a Rhodes Scholar and a close friend of Humayun Kabir—he was then in charge of the India section of the German Foreign Office, and he recommended Bose's bonafide to his superiors in strong terms.²⁸ Indologists like Professors Helmuth von Glasenapp and Ludwig Alsdorf also endorsed his views. As his reputation spread, and his position and popularity in India became known German officials became increasingly interested in securing his cooperation. Moreover, by the end of June 1941 Germany was involved in a war with Russia, and Axis forces were soon to launch an offensive in North Africa. In this changed situation India acquired a new importance in the eyes of the Germans, and they realised the value of an organised psychological offensive against Britain in Asia.³⁰ So there was a marked change in German attitude towards Bose, and they began respectfully agreeing to most of his demands.

In September 1941 began the recruitment for the future Azad Hind Fauj from among the Indian prisoners-of-war in German and Italian hands.³¹ Initially some senior German generals were

26. Girija Mookerjee, p. 197. Also, Ganpuley, pp. 70-71. Also, statements of Keppler and Col. Krappe.

27. Statements of Keppler and Alsdorf. Also, Girija Mookerjee, pp. 203, 205.

28. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 197-98. Statements of Heinrich Trott, Alsdorf and Nambiar.

29. Statements of Glasenapp and Alsdorf.

30. Ganpuley, pp. 40-41. Girija Mookerjee, p. 205. Also, Werth and Harbich, pp. 21, 23 and 33.

31. Werth and Harbich, p. 33. Also, statements of Krappe and Kutscher.

opposed to the idea of equipping Indians for fighting the Whites and of giving them training in the use of heavy guns and tanks.³² But their objections were soon waived, and by the time Bose left Germany in February 1943 the Azad Hind Fauj was about 5000 strong, grouped in four battalions.³³ Many of them were eventually selected for training in the use of modern sophisticated weapons.³⁴ The Azad Hind Radio too went on the air in October, and on 2 November 1941 the Free India Centre was formally opened in Berlin.³⁵ The Government agreed to bear all the expenses of the Fauj and of the Radio. They also agreed to pay Bose £800 per mensem as his personal allowance and £1200 to the Free India Centre. Subsequently the monthly grant to the Centre was raised to £3200..³⁶

Before the year was out, German attitude had changed still further in favour of Bose and the Indian national movement. By December their thrust towards Moscow had failed, and they were resigned to the depressing prospect of a long war of attrition with Russia. Since September Japan, too, was taking an interest in Bose, and her ambassador in Berlin, Count Hiroshi Oshima and his Military Attache, Yamamoto had a couple of meetings with him.³⁷ On 7 December she joined the war, and within a couple of months the banner of the Rising Sun was carried in triumph across South-East Asia to the very gates of Assam and Bengal. Suddenly India was hurled into the very centre of world politics, and the attitudes and aspirations of her people began figuring prominently in the political and military calculations of both the Allied and the Axis Powers.³⁸ Moreover, there are reasons to believe that though Germany and Italy, as members of the Anti-Comintern Pact, were the allies of Japan in their common struggle, they never actually

32. Girija Mookerjee, p. 209. Also, statements of Krappe and Kutscher.

33. Ganpuley, p. 96. Statement of a Seifriz in the preface to Ganpuley's book. Also, Werth and Harbich, p. 35.

34. Statements of Krappe and Kutscher. Also, Girija Mookerjee, p. 209.

35. Ganpuley, p. 41. Also, Werth and Harbich, pp. 21, 23. According to Girija Mookerjee, p. 207 the Free India Centre was formally opened in April 1942.

36. Ganpuley, p. 38. Statements of Keppler and Nambiar.

37. Joyce Lebra, *Chandra Bose to Nihon*, (Tokyo, 1968), p. 138.

38. Girija Mookerjee, p. 198. Also, statements of Nambiar and Alsdorf.

welcomed a Japanese occupation of India.³⁹ Though they benefitted from Japanese victories, they were envious of them too, and were somewhat mortified at the humiliation of their fellow Europeans at the hands of the yellow people.⁴⁰ Naturally they thought of protecting their future interests and influence in India by ingratiating themselves with her people,⁴¹ and for the Germans in those days Bose was the key to India. He, too, in the meantime, had impressed those around him with his organisational abilities, self confidence and dedication. Against the backdrop of the recent events in the east many in Germany began looking upon him as the future head of free India. People even thought that by helping and honouring him they would be able to enjoy special privileges in India after the war.⁴² So by January 1942 the Free India Centre had begun enjoying the status of a foreign diplomatic mission, and in official functions Bose soon came to be treated as the visiting head of a state.⁴³ Much of his personal position was also owing to his very friendly relations with and the respect he received from such illustrious Arab leaders in exile as Rashid Ali Jilani of Iraq and Haj al-Amini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.⁴⁴ The celerity with which Bose could acquire command over spoken German and the nuances of diplomatic etiquette and inter-state relations further added to the general respect for him.⁴⁵

However, Bose was extremely cautious in his dealings. He knew that close association with the Axis Powers would be looked upon with suspicion in India, and in the first few months he himself was not very sure of German intentions. So till the end of the year 1941 he kept his presence a secret from the outside world, and used to write in the Free India Centre's weekly, *The Azad Hind*, under the pen name of Orlando Mazzota.⁴⁶ Even the Azad Hind Radio

39. *Ciano's Diary*, op. cit., entries for 7 and 15 March 1942, pp. 443-46.

40. Statements of Girija Mookerjee, Nambiar and Dhavan.

41. Girija Mookerjee, p. 205. Also, statements of Nambiar and Dhavan.

42. *Ibid.* Also, Louis Lochner (Ed.), *Goebbels' Diary*, (London, 1948), p. 81. Also see *Schellenberg Memoirs*.

43. Ganpuley, p. 46. Also, Girija Mookerjee, pp. 209-10.

44. Girija Mookerjee, p. 215. Also, statements of Keppler and Alsdorf.

45. Girija Mookerjee, p. 215. Statements of Keppler and Nambiar.

46. The author has seen the entire collection of *The Azad Hind* with Dr. Kutscher at Karlsruhe.

used to make broadcasts as if from within India.⁴⁷ Only after most of his immediate demands had been met and relations between the German Government and his Centre had been put on a satisfactory footing did Bose make his first public appearance in Berlin on 26 January 1942, and addressed his countrymen over the radio.⁴⁸

Even so, the Germans, particularly Hitler, refused to make any declaration regarding India's independence. It is very difficult to explain why Hitler was so very shy in publicly committing himself in support of India. Keppler was of the view that Hitler nourished till the end of 1943 the secret hope of a separate peace with Britain—for whom he always had a grudging admiration—and that is why he was reluctant to do anything that might harden British attitude. To Bose's repeated requests Ribbentrop replied in November 1941 that Hitler was unwilling to make any statement which Germany would not be able to carry out in the near future.⁴⁹ Even a secret note of the German Ministry of information, dated 1 March 1942, was as follows: "We shall fight openly for India, but now we do not admit it so openly".⁵⁰ In May the Italians supported Bose's demand that the Free India Centre be accorded the legal status of a provisional government in exile. Japan too supported the above proposal.⁵¹ (In April the Japanese Government had already decided that Bose should be brought over to the east to lead the Indian national movement). But the Germans still refused to agree. So Bose sought an interview with Hitler himself. The meeting took place on 29 May but yielded little result.⁵² (Bose said in private that Hitler had impressed him as the German version of the Fakir of Ipi).⁵³ Naturally, Bose was embittered and frustrated, and began

47. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 199-211-12. Also, Ganpuley, p. 57.

48. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 194-95. Also, statements of Nambiar and Als-dorf.

49. Hirzowich Kukasz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, (London, 1946), pp. 211-19.

50. Goebbels' *Diary*, p. 67.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 157. Werth and Harbich, p. 35.

52. Werth and Harbich, p. 36, say the meeting took place on 28 May. Ganpuley, pp. 38, 44. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 209-10.

They all admit that after this meeting Bose's complete autonomy in his Indian affairs and the *de facto* diplomatic status of his organisation were guaranteed.

53. Girija Mookerjee, p. 210.

trying seriously to reach South-East Asia by any means so that he could play a more effective role in the struggle. After the German arms had reverses at Stalingrad and El Alamein towards the end of 1942, Bose lost all hope of a German victory, and was all the more eager to reach the east.⁵⁴ The Germans, however, were not very willing to let go such an influential figure from their country, but ultimately yielded to the importunities of Bose and their Japanese allies. He left Kiel by submarine on 8 February 1943 to reach Sabang in Sumatra on 5 May.⁵⁵

Even after Bose's departure—when A. C. N. Nambiar became the head of the Free India Centre—Indo-German relations remained as cordial as before, and the agreements arrived at earlier were meticulously observed by both the parties till the last month of the War. There was perfect understanding and goodwill between the Indians and Germans at all levels even when the Third Reich was crumbling, and years later they now recall those days with pride and pleasure.⁵⁶ This was possible primarily because—as Bose realised quite early—there were two Germanies. If the Nazi leaders had their own peculiar ideas and ambitions, the average German, including generals and diplomats, shared the expectations and behaviour patterns of their counterparts elsewhere. They respected Bose for his personality and manifold qualities, and found in Indian nationalism an emerging ally. Bose too, like a practical politician, never expected an identity of views and values, and while agreeing to disagree on various points sought to ensure a common effort against the common enemy.

54. *Ibid.*, 202. Also, Werth and Harbich, p. 39.

55. Lebra, pp. 139, 141-42. Also, A. C. Chatterjee, *India's Fight for Freedom*, (Calcutta, 1947), p. 67.

56. Girija Mookerjee, pp. 255-60. A. Seifriz in the preface to Ganpuley's book. Also, statements of Alsdorf, Kutscher and Nambiar.

Sir Henry Cotton (1845-1915)

BY

PRAPHULLADATTA GOSWAMI

I

Sir Henry Cotton was one of those outstanding Civil Service men who left a mark on Indian administration. A graduate of King's College, London, his interests were wide and when he came to India he began showing a grasp of affairs and an observation of political movements in this land that lent him competence to even criticise Government policy in relation to India.

He wrote two books, *New India or India in Transition* (1885) and *Indian and Home Memories* (1911), besides several reports the most important of which being, *Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong* (April 1880), some articles in Indian papers and magazines like *The Bengalee* and *Calcutta Review*, and in England in the *Fortnightly*, edited by John Morley and in other magazines and papers. The article that John Morley accepted (Dec. 1877), was 'Has India Food for its People?' He also co-operated with Sir William Hunter in the preparation of the *Gazetteer of India*.

Cotton appreciated the attitude of Lord Ripon and the latter's attempt to encourage local self-government to withdraw the privilege held by European British subjects of being tried by magistrates of their own race, and to initiate other liberal measures. On the Ilbert Bill issue of 1883-4 Cotton sided with the Indians.¹ His opponents came to describe him as a 'white babu'. A slightly junior contemporary of him said, "I never met a man more enthusiastic for Indians and their cause."² What Cotton has to say on the matter has a ring of prophesy: "The ultimate effect of the insane agitation was to

1. The amendment was originally proposed by Sir Ashley Eden, Lt. Governor of Bengal. The Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council by Sir Courtenay Ilbert.

2. Lord Beveridge, *India Called Them*, 1947, p. 392.

give rise to a movement of the widest reaching character and scope which few at that time were able to foresee. The great Indian movement of which we now hear so much and are assuredly destined to hear much more, is due to causes intended to produce a very different effect. The germ of a national organisation on the basis of English education had long existed, but it only sprang to life in the eighties. The Anglo-Indian agitation against Lord Ripon's government, the protests which asserted that 'the only people who have any right to India are the British,' the whole attitude of Englishmen in regard to Indian interests—these things have succeeded far more in advancing the cause of Indian unity than any action or legislation on the lines contemplated by that Viceroy could have accomplished."³

Cotton was a thoroughgoing man. He had already in 1883 delivered a public address to a London audience vindicating the policy of Lord Ripon. This was published in the form of a pamphlet, which later, in 1885, took the shape of *New India*. The book passed through many editions. Let me present a few excerpts from the edition of 1904:

One of the healthiest impulses which can be traced in the Hindoo society is the corresponding change which has come over the masses of the people, who have now learnt to transfer their allegiance to the educated classes as their natural and best representatives. (p. 20)

The Indian Services as a body have no sympathy with the aspirations of the educated portion of the native community. The opposition to all proposals for the enlargement of India's liberties is headed by members of the Civil Service, and the unanimity of opposition is almost as marked among magistrates and judges as it is among planters, merchants, and members of other professions. The dislike to the educated natives of India is shared by all classes of Englishmen. (p. 63)

Cotton notes that Englishmen's dislike is stronger than native dislike and observes:

Those who know the Indians best will be the first to acknowledge the natural affection and gratefulness of their disposition. (p. 63)

3. Cotton: *Indian and Home Memories*, pp. 180-81.

Cotton had the generosity to appreciate with sympathy the discontent from which educated Indians suffered, for he knew that at the root of this discontent were "political disabilities" and "the consciousness of the economic evil which the exploitation of the country by foreign capital and foreign agencies inflict on it." (p. 67)

If he went out of his way to publicise Lord Ripon's policies, he found it hard to appreciate Lord Curzon's opinions and activities. As he writes:

The identification of interests of all classes of Europeans in India has been Lord Curzon's consistent endeavour. To the tea-planters of Assam he said: "I look upon all Englishmen in this country as engaged in different branches of the same great undertaking. Here we are all fellow-countrymen, comrades and friends. The fact that some of us earn our livelihood or discharge our duty by the will of administration, and others by cultivating the resources of the soil, does not differentiate us one from the other. These are merely the subdivisions of labour; they are not distinctions of object or purpose or aim." And again on another occasion in addressing the mine-owners he declared: "My work lies in administration, yours in exploitation; but both are aspects of the same question and of the same duty." There is no word of the obligation of English officials to devote themselves to the duty of championing the cause of their suffering fellow-subjects, or of protecting them from oppression; no word of the duty of the strong to protect the weak. (pp. 55-56)

The Curzon Hall (now Nabinchandra Bardaloi) at Gauhati commemorates Lord Curzon's visit to Assam in March, 1900. In *Indian and Home Memories* Cotton notes with a little bitterness that the Viceroy was not only unwilling to offer some help to this backward province but did not have even the grace to say something consolatory to win the heart of the people. Curzon said in reply to an address: "It is not fair of you to tax the Government of India with neglect; as a fact it has always taken a very great interest in the province; but the true secret of the woes of Assam is the same as that which Mr. Disraeli said was the true secret of the woes of Ireland. He said that Ireland lay under weeping skies surrounded by a melancholy ocean." (pp. 243-244) As pointed out by Cotton, Curzon held the climate of Assam responsible for its failure to prosper! Further, after debiting to

Assam "the prodigious losses which had been incurred by the mistaken alignment of the Assam Bengal Railway, a measure of high policy in which local interests had received a very small share of consideration," the Viceroy charged: "You complain of the want of pecuniary assistance from the Government, but, when I examine the accounts, I find that the annual balance is against Assam." (p. 294).

As Chief Commissioner Cotton meant well by Assam. As he writes in *Indian and Home Memories*:

Nevertheless, although the resources at my disposal were always insufficient, I did something for the good of the province. I point to none of the features of my administration with more satisfaction than to the improvement in jail management.... I reduced the number of jail floggings by three-quarters,.... and spared no exertion to improve the sanitary conditions of jail life.... I reorganised the civil police. I reconstituted both the Assam Commission and the Provincial Service on terms very favourable to their members. I prepared a scheme for the reconstruction of Local Boards. To the encouragement of education I devoted the best of my energies. I regard it as a great honour that my name should be associated with a first-class college which I inaugurated at Gowhatty.... I combated energetically the ravages of *kalaazar* and remedied as far as possible a standing grievance from all parts of Assam known as *begar*, or forced labour. I improved communications, and encouraged both the railway system and river steam companies. In a general scheme for developing the resources of the province. I pressed forward a well-devised system of tramways as feeders to the main line of railway and to the river bank. Metalled roads cannot be maintained on account of the cost and no earthen road is capable of standing regular wheeled traffic when the rainfall is as heavy as it is in Assam. (pp. 244-245).

The proposal of tramways, which did not materialise, reminds us of a question which Manik Chandra Barooah raised in the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam on the matter of a tramway line from Kampur to Silghat in the Nowgong district.

Cotton did a lot for the tea industry with which the progress of Assam was linked up and it was this industry which ultimately forced him to leave this province. Let us first hear what he did for the industry;

I threw open large tracts of country for occupation.... I did my utmost to extend and encourage the local manufacture of tea-boxes. The Surma Valley Tea Association owes its existence to my initiative I spent the public funds liberally in the furtherance of tea interests. I devoted my private funds, to the same object. I gave every encouragement to planters to take up lands for ordinary cultivation in the neighbourhood of their gardens, and granted them leases on very favourable terms for the cultivation of new staples, such as sisal, hemp, rhea, and rubber. I helped them in their endeavours to strike oil and coal and other minerals. I spared no pains to improve conditions of coolie transit from the recruiting districts to Assam, and may boast that I improved them to the immense advantage of the industry. (p. 246)

What made the industry forget his contributions was his interest in the welfare of coolies. At that time the monthly wage of a male labourer was Rs. 5, rising to Rs. 6 in the fourth year, the coolie having been under agreement to work for four years. The Government wanted to raise this miserably inadequate wage and proposed a new Assam Labour and Emigration Bill.^{3a} Cotton was temporarily appointed member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council in addition to his duties as Chief Commissioner for the consideration of the new Bill. In the words of Cotton, "An acute issue had been drawn up between the interests of Capital and Labour. The labourers in Assam are an ignorant and voiceless community, and they had no organ to press their demands there was no labour member to argue the coolies' cause, So I was left to fight the cause of Labour single-handed and alone, and found myself during our discussions in a hopeless minority." (pp. 259-260).

The Bill had proposed to alter the wage rate to Rs. 6 per man throughout the period of the contract. The opposition was such that Lord Curzon quailed and the status quo remained. Cotton "challenged him across the Council Board with the charge that he was stultifying his own policy, and he rejoined that I was exceeding the limits of decorous debate. I forced a division in Council

3a. Surendranath Banerjea had tried to raise the question of the Assam Emigration Act and discuss the grievances of the Assam coolies at the second Congress at Allahabad, but Dadabhai Naoroji persuaded him to drop it since it was rather a subject for the discussion of the Bengal Provincial Congress.—Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, 1968, p. 296.

on the question of this postponment (of the new rate, now badly modified) but was supported by only a few Indian members." (p. 261).

Worse was to come. "The scene of battle shifted to the question of the actual condition of the labouring population It was impossible for me to express the conviction that the gravest abuses were prevalent on tea gardens without at the same time substantiating it by the production of evidence I wrote my last Labour Report for 1900. It was a tale of misery and wrong which it was my duty to unfold from my seat in Council and in that Report." (pp. 264-265) Cotton mentions that he had seen with his own eyes a Government hospital full of sickly and dying coolies whose contracts had been cancelled and who had been expelled from their garden. He had seen dead and dying coolies lying in the ditch by the roadside and in the bazaar. He had noticed that the death rate of imported coolies was as high as 84 or 85 per thousand. Further, the relation between the employer and the employee was not only unfair but when there was a case of collision between the planter and the coolie the hand of justice came down heavily on the latter.

At first Curzon himself wrote to Cotton, in 1899, drawing the latter's attention to the many cases of collision. The subject was one which was sure to get the planters' hackles up. Cotton, therefore, replied rather in an evasive manner. "It is to Lord Curzon's credit" that he insisted on a special enquiry for details of every case of collision between planters and coolies. This strengthened the hands of Cotton and he furnished cases in which magistrates had administered justice in a very one-sided manner. But "the floodgates of abuse in the Anglo-Indian Press were opened," and he was attacked with unusual virulence. As he observes, "A section of the [planting] community had set itself up in an attitude of defiance of the Administration because I ventured to expose in fearless terms that everything connected with the industry was not *couleur de thé*." (p. 275)

The worst was that "In the face of a rising storm of unpopularity from his own countrymen, Lord Curzon quailed. In a published letter to the Indian Tea Association on the 5th of February, 1902, he saved his own skin but deliberately flung me to

the wolves." (p. 276) It was now time for Cotton to leave. "I had already received an intimation that the sooner I vacated my appointment the more convenient it would be for the Government of India. I had no desire to make any protest. My health was at the time very much broken, and in case I should have been compelled to seek an interval of rest. So it came about that I applied for and obtained leave from the end of April to the end of October, when my thirty-five years of service would have expired." (p. 277)

When he left, from Assam to Bombay, no provincial Governor was accorded the demonstrations of sympathy and regret that he received. He was given an ovation in Calcutta, and his marble bust was kept in the Town Hall. A replica of this bust, both made by the London sculptor Henry Hugh Armstead, has also been preserved at Cotton College, Gauhati. When Cotton visited India again as Congress President in 1904, he paid a visit to Assam too. "From Calcutta I extended my visit to Assam as far as Gowhatty, where I met with another great ovation from my Indian friends, but marked inattention from my successor [Sir Bamfylde Fuller] in the government of the province, which was reflected by the local subordinate officials. I was left to put up at the public dawkh bungalow." (p. 291)

II

Cotton was born in September, 1845, at Kumbakonam in Madras (Tamil Nadu) and was the fourth of his family to be in India. As he writes in the Preface to the 1904 edition of *New India*, "I have served thirty-five years as a member of the Indian Civil Service. My father and grandfather were members of that service before me for sixty years. My son⁴ is now employed in that service A spirit of devotion to the people of the country is not inconsistent with, and has never obliterated my sense of official duties." (p. vii)

4. Perhaps his second son; his eldest son, H.E.A. Cotton (1868-1939), practised as Barrister in Calcutta during the days of Partition of Bengal; later President of the Bengal Legislature (1922-25); editor of *India*, the London newspaper of the Indian National Congress, 1906-18; Liberal M.P., 1918; knighted in 1925. He received Surendranath Banerjea on the latter's visit to England in 1909.

He came to India in 1867 and had his first appointment at Midnapore as Assistant to the Magistrate. Later he was given charge of the Chuadanga Sub-Division (now in E. Pakistan). He wrote the *Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong* while serving as Magistrate and Collector of Chittagong district (now in E. Pakistan). The separation of Assam from Bengal was definitely settled in 1873; Cotton's name had cropped up as Chief Secretary to Assam's first Chief Commissioner Col. R. H. Keatinge, V. C., but the person finally appointed was one Luttman-Johnson. Cotton's name occurs again in relation to Assam. In 1896 Sir William Ward, Chief Commissioner of Assam, submitted a scheme for the transfer of the Chittagong Division of Bengal to Assam. There was already a proposal for the transfer of the Lushai Hills to Assam. It was owing to Cotton, who succeeded Ward as Chief Commissioner, after serving for a period as Chief Secretary in Bengal, and who was aware of the strong public reaction to the proposal, that the transfer of Chittagong was stopped. The Lushai Hills, however, were tagged on to Assam.

Sir Surendranath Banerjea appreciated Cotton's role as Chief Secretary of Bengal and valued the latter as a friend and guide. Cotton too was outspoken in his moral support of Banerjea. In 1909, when Banerjea was on a visit to London, Cotton said at a dinner, "if the growth of national feeling in India and of the sense of patriotism and enthusiasm for the motherland was due to any man, that man was Babu Surendranath Banerjea."⁵ It is interesting what a diehard like Valentine Chirol, Director of the Foreign Department of *The Times*, 1899-1912, has to say on the role of Civilians of the kind of Cotton:⁶ "Do not, however, let us throw the blame wholly upon the Congress. For, like Mr. Telang, it has been induced to put its trust in 'the friends amongst the garrison'—Englishmen often of widely different types and characters, like Bradlaugh and Hume [founder of the Indian National Congress] and Webb and Sir William Wedderburn, and in more recent days Sir Henry Cotton and Mr. Mackarness—and upon them must rest no small responsibility for the diversion of many of the best talents and energies of educated India from the thorny path of social reform into the more popular field of political agitation."

5. Sir Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, 1925, p. 269.

6. Sir Valentine Chirol, *Indian, Unrest*, 1910, pp. 156-157.

Even after retirement Cotton kept his eye on Indian affairs. When the suspicion of Russian intrigue in Lhasa led Curzon to send an expedition to Tibet and when the "pacific mission" on March 30, 1904, mowed down some seven hundred monks and husbandmen at a place called Guru,⁷ Cotton wrote forceful letters in the *Times* criticizing the Tibetan policy of the Viceroy. He points out in his autobiography that it was Curzon's move which ultimately strengthened the hands of China over Tibet.

Cotton got elected as Liberal M.P. from East Nottingham and remained in Parliament from 1906 to 1910. He was at the head of a group of Members known as the Indian group, for they all had been in the Indian Civil Service, men like Sir John Jardine and T. Hart-Davies of Bombay, Donald Smeaton and C. J. O'Donnell of Bengal. These Members put supplementary questions and tried to embarrass John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, whenever Government measures in India became too restrictive or Government policy seemed to be wrongheaded. The news that Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, the latter a youth of twenty-two, had been arrested and deported without charge or trial, was a shock to Cotton and on June 11, 1907 he put the question: Will the right hon. gentleman lay the facts of the case on the Table of the House? Morley replied: I think anything more injudicious, from the point of view of Government of law and order, than that which the hon. gentleman suggests cannot be imagined. (p. 319)

Cotton ruefully observes that in a similar case, when one Cartwright was arbitrarily detained in Capetown, only five years earlier Morely had characterised the action as "the most outrageous and indefensible answer ever given within these walls since Simon de Montfort invented Parliament." But as the charges against Lajpat Rai could not be substantiated, he as well as the youth were released after six months' imprisonment, and the charges originally made in the House of Commons were also deleted by Morley from his published speeches. (pp. 310-320)

7. According to another version, "Over 600 of the 1500 Tibetans were killed. There were no British deaths."—Martin Gilbert, *Servant of India*, 1966, p. 17.

Cotton seemed to have lost his faith in the great Morley's liberalism. One contemporary of his, Sir James Dunlop Smith, Private Secretary to Lord Minto, seems to suggest however that the Secretary of State was not quite indifferent to affairs in India and made an attempt to check some of the repressive measures and miscarriage of justice so usual at the time. On August 26, 1908, he wrote to Lord Minto:⁸

If we are not strong enough to prevent murder, then our pharisaic glorification of the stern justice of the British Raj is windy non-sense. And the fundamental question for you and me today is whether the excited Corporal and the Angry Planter are to be the arbiters of our policy On the other hand, is it not idle for us to pretend to the Natives that we wish to understand their sentiment, and satisfy the demands of 'honest reformers', and all the rest of our benignant talk, and yet silently acquiesce in all the rest violent sentences ?

It was also at Morley's pressure that Lord Minto accepted the resignation of Sir Bamfylde Fuller, Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, who had started showing preference to Muslims rather tactlessly and "played the fool in many ways."⁹

As it seems, Sir Henry John Stedman Cotton lived a full and useful life. He rendered distinct services to India not merely as an administrator but as one who gave moral support to Sir Surendranath Banerjea, exposed the Divide and Rule principle of the British in partitioning Bengal and inciting religious feud, helped in the amelioration of the abominable conditions in Assam's tea gardens, worked hard for the welfare of Assam, and generally fought for the Indian cause. His name should, I feel, find a niche in the annals of modern India. His two books—*New India* and *Indian and Home Memories* are valuable source material for a study of India's social and political development and deserve reprint.

8. Martin Gilbert, *Servant of India*, 1966, pp. 168-169.

9. *Ibid*, p. 48 and p. 50.

The Panjab and The Indian "Mutiny"

BY

SALAHUDDIN MALIK

The years 1857-59 were certainly a turning point in the history of India; during these fateful years practically the whole of India was convulsed in what has been variously described as the "Great Mutiny," a "social rebellion miscalled a military mutiny,"¹ a "servile war and a sort of jacquerie combined,"² a "patriotic war,"³ a "Muslim rebellion,"⁴ a "national movement in the fullest sense,"⁵ a "Russian intrigue,"⁶ and the like. In certain regions the tremors of the uprising were felt rather severely, while in certain others, their intensity was comparatively lighter. It cannot, however, be denied that the revolt was virtually India-wide and that the British were genuinely alarmed at its extent and were greatly concerned about India, British prestige, and the Empire.

1. Gen. Sir Robert William Gardner, *Military Analysis of the Remote and Proximate Causes of the Indian Rebellion* (2nd. ed., Lond: 1858), p. 34.

2. W. H. Russell, *My Diary in India* (Two Vols.; 7th Thousand; Lond: 1860) I, p. 164.

3. *People's Paper*, July 11, 1857.

4. This was a very widely held opinion. For a greater comprehension of this interpretation, the reader is advised to refer to the author's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: *Mutiny, Revolution Or Muslim Rebellion? British Public Reactions Toward the Indian Crisis of 1857*, McGill, 1966.

In chapters seven and eight of the dissertation, the author has thrown sufficient light on this well-substantiated view of the uprising.

5. *Morning Herald*, cited in the *People's Paper*, Sept. 26, 1857.

6. David Urquhart, [Speech of] Mr. Urquhart in Newcastle, May 27, 1858 (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: 1858), pp. 10-12; Lieut. William A. Aikman, *The Bengal Mutiny* (Lond: 1857), p. 1; *How to Keep India* (Lond: Richardson Bros., 1857), pp. IV-V and 2; "The Mutiny at Delhi," *London Journal and Weekly Record of Literature, Science and Arts*, XXV, 1857, p. 361; *Illustrated London News*, July 3, 1857; L. E. Ruutz Rees, *A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow* (Lond: 1858), p. 117.

Every effort was made to preserve the integrity of the Empire. From official and private prayers for Divine succour,⁷ public urging for national unity, diversion to India of Canton-bound expeditionary force,⁸ reinforcements from Great Britain, South Africa, Ceylon, Pegu and Mauritius which more than doubled the European army already stationed in India,⁹ military equipment, horses, and financial assistance from all over the Empire,¹⁰ reduction at home in the height for many enlistment to five feet four inches,¹¹ to the unpalatable military help from the Portuguese at Goa,¹² no stone was left unturned and no avenue unexplored which could aid the administration in the quick and effective suppression of the insurrection.

It is believed that at this hour of grave crisis in British history, the Panjab stood aloof from the rebels and helped the English to re-establish their rule in India. If Sir John Lawrence was hailed as the savior of India,¹³ the Panjabis were frequently referred to as

7. The Government of Lord Palmerston appointed Wednesday, October 7, 1857, a working day, as a "Day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer." All over Britain, people were urged to go to the churches, humiliate themselves before God, seek forgiveness of their past national sins, and, above all, pray for the safety of their kith and kin and the success of their armies in India. In consequence, throughout the land several services were held in every church, especially the conforming ones, and Divine mercy was passionately and, perhaps, successfully sought.

8. Hansard 3, CXLVII, c. 62 and CXLVIII, cc. 811-12; *Punjab Government Records: Mutiny Reports*, hereafter referred to as *PGR: MR*, (Lahore: 1911), VIII, pt. I, p. 94.

9. Hansard 3, CXLVIII, cc. 463-64, 811-12, and 873-74, CLI, c. 1182, and CLII, c. 359; *PGR: MR*, VIII, pt. I, pp. 94 and 100.

10. Hansard 3, CXLVIII, cc. 463-64, 705, 811-12, 861, and 874.

11. *The Nation*, Oct. 31, 1857. This was described to be an all time low standard, "one inch below the lowest standard during the Crimean War."

12. Sir G. Le Jacob, *Western India Before and During the Mutinies* (Lond: 1871), pp. 232-36.

13. Many Britons believed that God specifically created Sir John Lawrence to save India for their country. The British Parliament, however, gave a more practical shape to their gratitude to the Chief Commissioner. In recognition of the valuable services rendered by Sir John in the Punjab and India as a whole, the House of Commons passed a vote of thanks to him, raised his salary from £ 7,500 to £ 10,000 a year, and awarded him Grand Cross of Path. The Court of Directors of the East India Company, on the other hand, settled an annuity of £ 2,000 upon him. Senior, "The Man for India,"

the bulwarks of his efforts. In fact, the loyalty of the Panjabis was often quoted to disprove the view that the uprising was a show of popular disaffection against the colonial government. This, however, does not seem to have been the whole truth—at least this is how it appears from the reports, official and private, of Englishmen of the "mutiny" experience in India. The present research, therefore, attempts to throw light on the situation in the Panjab as analyzed by the British.

The Panjab, its people, and the native regiments stationed in the region were certainly not out of the anti-British schemes of the mutineers, rebels, and patriots of 1857. Every effort was made at all levels to bring the Panjabis into the network of the revolt. Bahādur Shāh, Nānā Sāhib, 'Azīmullāh Khān, and other leaders of the rebellion established contacts with the people of the Panjab, including the Sikhs. William Howard Russel,¹⁴ who successfully established 'Azīmullāh's role in the outbreak, points out that soon after his arrival in India from his travels in England, France, Turkey, and the Crimea, 'Azīm accompanied Nānā Sāhib to the Panjab in order to tamper with the loyalty of sepoy regiments in that province. Russell observes that

...the worthy couple, on the pretence of a pilgrimage to the hills—a Hindu and Mussulman joined in a holy excursion!—visited the military stations all along the main trunk road and went as far as Umballah [Ambala]. It has been suggested that

Letter to *The Spectator*, Dec. 5, 1857; Hansard 3, CXLVIII, c. 814 and CLI, c. 2125; The Rev. W. J. Newman, "Our Mercies in the Past and Our Prospects for the Future," (a sermon preached on May 1, 1859, being the Day of General Thanksgiving for the Success in India), *The Pulpit*, LXXV, 1859, p. 442; *After Deliverance Trial* (a sermon preached on May 1, 1859), (Lond: Ravington, 1859). pp. 5-6; George Crawshay, *Proselytism Destructive of Christianity and Incompatible with Political Dominion. Speech of Mr. Crawshay at the India House on the Vote of an Annuity to Sir John Lawrence* (Lond: 1859), p. 25.

14. The world's first war correspondent and a seasoned journalist, W. H. Russell was the only professional correspondent stationed in India by *The Times* to cover the "mutiny". Before going to India, Russell had earlier covered the Schleswig-Holstein affair, 1850, and the Crimean War, 1854-56, for *The Times*. After the revolt was over, Russell published an authentic two-volume account of the uprising in the form of a diary. His views gained so much acceptance that Routledge, Warne and Co. published 7,000 copies before the end of 1860.

their object in going to Simla was to tamper with the Goorkha [Gōrkha] regiment stationed in the hills; but that, finding on their arrival at Umballah, a portion of the regiment were in the cantonements, they were able to effect their purpose with these men, and desisted from the proposed journey on the plea of the cold weather.¹⁵

Robert Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner of the Panjab, reports that Muslims of Patna and Thanesar were in correspondence with the 64th N. I. Regiment near Peshawar and urged the unit to revolt against the Government. The anti-British elements at Patna went to the extent of procuring letters from the mothers of several soldiers of the 64th, which impressed upon them the necessity of emulating the deeds performed in Central India. The letters emphasized that the soldiers should resort to such a course of action even at the expense of their lives; that, in doing so, if they died they would be entitled to enter heaven and "their deaths ... would be pleasant news at home."¹⁶ It was further reported that Muslims of Patna were also in correspondence with some Indian Muslims settled in Swat and at Sittana and that the agency employed for such contacts was the 64th itself.¹⁷

In the course of the rebellion, however, Bahādur Shāh made desperate efforts to influence the course of events in the Panjab. It was authoritatively reported that Bahādur sent messenger after messenger to the Rājā of Patiala and tried to convince him of his cause. One of his letters to the Prince of Patiala read in these words:

To him of noble rank and lordly dignity, our own devoted vassal, worthy of our confidence and favour, the union of benevolence and high-mindedness, Nur Inder Singh, Bahadur, the Maharaja of Pattiala.
Dated the 21st Ramzan.

15. W. H. Russell, *My Diary in India*, I, p. 168.

16. [Robert Montgomery and Richard Temple], *Selections from the Public Correspondence of the Administration for the Affairs of the Punjab—Punjab Mutiny Report* (Lahore: 1859), IV, No. I, p. 86. For similar information, see also: The Rev. J. Cave-Brown, *the Punjab and Delhi in 1857*. (Two Vols; Eding and Lond: 1861), I, p. 154; Col. S. Dewe White, *A Complete History of the Indian Mutiny* (Weston-Super-Mare: 1885), p. 52; T. Rice Holmes, *A History of the Indian Mutiny* (5th ed. rev. and encl.; Lond: 1898), p. 324.

17. White, p. 52; Holmes, p. 324, cf. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 60-61.

'My life is passing from my lips; come then, that I may survive; For if I cease to be, what will become of you?'

Of the down fall of this Government, and of the great revolutions in the course of development, which are at the present being bruited about, you have heard from the papers. Relying upon your well-proved devotedness and loyalty towards this our own favour-bestowing family, you are written to, that, with all possible speed, you present yourself at our Court, resembling that of Khusrau, with a suitably-equipped force.

'This matter admits of no delay,
for in this extremity,
There is neither plan of attack
nor way of escape.'

In such straits, therefore, it behoves you, as you desire the increase of our power and our welfare, to obey this summons without delay.¹⁸

At one point, Douglas Forsyth, Deputy Commissioner of Ambala, found the emissaries of the King of Delhi in audience with the Rājā of Patiala.¹⁹ Failing with the Rājā, Bahadur turned to his subjects; several seditious letters sent by the "Rebel King" to the people of Patiala were intercepted by the Rājā and forwarded to the British commissioner of the district.²⁰

Proclamations were issued to the sepoy regiments at Lahore and elsewhere in the Panjab ordering them to revolt against the British and join in the common cause at Delhi.²¹ The mutiny and the uprising at Sialkot were described as an immediate result of the arrival of a messenger from Delhi who was said to have come

18. "The Poorbeah Mutiny; The Punjab—No. III," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, LXXXIII, 1858, p. 601; Cave-Browne, I, pp. 224-25. For similar information, see also: PGR: MR, VIII, pt. I, pp. 73-74; Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India* (Two Vols.; Lond: 1897), I, p. 103; Sir Douglas Forsyth, *Autobiography and Reminiscences of*, ed. by Ethel Forsyth (Lond: 1887), pp. 20-21.

19. Roberts, I, p. 103; Forsyth, pp. 20-21.

20. Thomas Frost (ed.), *Complete Narrative of the Mutiny in India, from its Commencement to the Present Time* (Lond: n.d.), p. 11.

21. PGR: MR, VIII, pt. I, p. 143.

to remind the 35th Light Infantry and 46th Native Infantry regiments to "fulfil their pledge" made as long ago as January 1857.²² Emissaries of disaffection were also sent to the states of Alwar, Bharatpur, and Jaipur.²³ The far-flung hills of the Panjab were not safe from the agents of Delhi either. Discussing the situation at Kasauli and Sanaur, Frederick Henry Cooper, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, reported:

Before and during these troubles, *faqeers* [Faqirs, meaning beggars, religious mendicants] were everywhere seen about the neighbourhood; and I have since learnt that emissaries from Oude [Awadh] and Delhi were empowered to offer seven rupees per month to anyone willing to enter the service of the respective pretenders to sovereignty. About a hundred *coolies* [Qulis, meaning porters] employed at the [Lawrence] Asylum went off to Oude in consequence, and small drafts of Poorbeas have been continually leaving the hills during the whole period for Oude and Delhi.²⁴

Nearer Delhi Bahādur Shāh issued proclamations to the besieging Sikh regiments calling upon them to "desert from the British army and join the army of Islam." In return he promised to receive them with "open arms" and reward "their devotion . . . by *jagheers* [Jāgirs, meaning land grants]."²⁵

So sure the luckless Emperor seems to have been of the Panjab that earlier he is even said to have written a letter to Robert Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner of the province. In it the *Mughal* sovereign was rumoured to have expressed his deep gratitude to Montgomery for his "excellent" administration of the Panjab on behalf of Delhi. Bahādur further added that since he was now himself "prepared to undertake the necessary arrangements for the future government of India," he could dispense with the services of the commissioner and accord him his "royal permission . . . to retire via Bombay."²⁶

22. "The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Punjab—No. V", *Blackwood's*... LXXXIV, 1858, p. 31; Cave-Browne, II, p. 60 and 60n.

23. *PGR*: MR, VIII, pt. I, pp. 75 and 244.

24. Fredrick H. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab from the 10th of May until the Fall of Delhi* (Lond: 1858), pp. 117-18.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32. cf. Montgomery and Temple, p. 58.

Evidently, these known, unknown, and rumoured efforts of the rebels and mutineers to charm the province of Panjab into their movement failed to achieve satisfactory results. The comparative calm in the province, however, was not as much due to the loyalty of the people to the British as it was due to their greater diversity and the steps taken by the Government.

The unruly spirits and the fighting potential in the Panjab had already been much reduced as a result of the two Sikh wars. The administrative measures which followed the British conquest of the Panjab further tamed the co-religionists of Ranjīt Singh; the province was completely disarmed; non-government fortifications were razed to the ground; manufacture and sale of arms and munitions of war were forbidden; the Khālśa army was disbanded; the estates of powerful nobles were seized and, above all, 8,000 persons were jailed in the very first year of the British administration of the province.²⁷ Steps such as these took the heart out of the Sikh nation; the blows received were too recent and too hard to inspire them to another trial of strength.

Also, in 1857 the Sikhs were a leaderless mass. Many of their leaders had perished in the military upheavels and the two Sikh wars which followed the death of Ranjit Singh. Those living were either prisoners or had converted to Christianity, i.e., Shēr Singh, one of the most popular Sikh leaders, was a prisoner at Calcutta; Dalip Singh embraced Christianity and became a Scottish laird; Tējā Singh who led the Sikh armies at Ferozeshah and Sobraon was a pensioner of the British, and Bikram Singh, Sikh high priest and a lineal descendant of Guru Nānak, "was virtually a prisoner within his own holy city."²⁸ Indeed, the Sikh defeat and pacification were complete. As early as July 31, 1856, an Englishman of Indian experience observed:

27. "India under Dalhousie," *Blackwood's...*, LXXXI, 1856, pp. 239-4; Sir Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India* (Lond: 1882), p. 67. Referring to the easy compliance of the Sikhs to the steps taken by the Government, Richard Temple, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner for the Punjab, observed, "Upon these sturdy and courageous people the British victories seemed to have acted like a spell."

28. Cave-Browne, I, p. 223 and 233n.

In the strange history of British India I know no fact more strange than this. It is not twelve years since the followers of this faith (Sikhism) formed the dominant military class of a great country and rivaled and almost defeated the British in the field. Yet they have been so utterly subjugated that they have lost not only the hope but also the desire of resistance.²⁹

The condition of Panjabi Muslims was still worse. They had gone through long years of Sikh oppression and were certainly not in a position to actively join the rebels.

More importantly, the Panjab had received the largest share of the European army stationed in India—twelve European regiments for an estimated population of thirteen million heterogeneous people.³⁰ Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Panjab, was pre-eminently fortunate in the choice of his officers. He had gathered around him a group of splendid soldier-administrators and empire-builders, men like John Nicholson, Robert Montgomery, Herbert Edwardes, Donald Macleod, General Reed, Sir Sydney Cotton, Neville Chamberlain, Frederick Henry Cooper, Arthur Roberts, Richard Lawrence, George Ricketts, Douglas Forsyth, George Barnes, Lieut. Col. James Macpherson and so on.³¹ The *Church of England Magazine* affectionately described them as "Christian militants."³² They acted as one man and at once put the entire administrative machinery into active gear; their first care was to secure the native army stationed in the Panjab as well as the Sikh nation and the princely states in the region.

The Lahore administration was lucky to have received timely and advance warnings via telegram of the adverse winds which

29. *Manchester Guardian*, July 31, 1856.

30. *Ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1857; *PGR: MR*, VIII, pt. I, p. 95; Montgomery and Temple, p. 153.

31. In 1858 Sir John Lawrence wrote to the Secretary of State for India: Had it not been for men like Robert Montgomerie, Herbert Edwardes, Neville Chamberlain, Mr. Frere, the Commissioner of Scinde, George Barnes, Arthur Roberts, George Ricketts and others, we could never have weathered the storm. *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, pp. 343-43, cited in White, p. 48.

32. "Missionary Records—Punjab, its Loyalty," *Church of England Magazine*, XLIV, 1858, p. 33.

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had started to blow in the central provinces. While the sepoys in the Panjab were getting ready to revolt, the administration took them by surprise by its foreknowledge of their intentions. The disarmings which followed took the sting out of a dangerous situation in the province. A slight let-up on the part of the civil and military authorities in the Panjab might well have cost Britain her Indian Empire.³³ In fact, it was discovered that a general revolt of the native regiments stationed in the Panjab was a matter of days and, in some cases, only a few hours.³⁴ Had the sepoys been able to seize the initiative, civilian population would have readily joined them in large numbers, especially the Muslims. As will be shown later on, even the Government was under no illusions about the loyalty of Panjabi Muslims.

Take for instance Peshawar: military and civilian situation at that station was highly menacing. Stringent postal censorship revealed that nearly all the native regiments stationed at Peshawar were disaffected and ready to revolt. Intercepted letters disclosed May 22, 1857, as the day appointed for the uprising. Sepoy preparations were so complete that they had sent their women and children to the city. Elaborate espionage and postal censorship saved the British. A few hours before the sepoys could translate their plans into action they were taken to the parade ground and disarmed in the presence of European artillery.³⁵ To intimidate the disloyal and wavering elements in the Peshawar valley, 523 sepoys were publicly executed during the next few days. Of

33. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 2 and 38-39. In fact, it was a very widely-shared view that the electric telegraph had saved the Punjab and that the latter, in turn, had saved India for Britain.

34. Cave-Browne, I, pp. 92-96 and 120; White, p. 49; Cooper, p. 7; Henry Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India, Civil, Military and Social, from the first Landing of the English, to the Suppression of the Sepoy Revolt* (Three Vols.; Lond: 1862), III. p. 573; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 2 and 38-39.

35. Gen. Sir Sydney Cotton, *Nine Years on the North-West Frontier of India* (Lond: 1868), p. 171; "A Few Words from the Khyber," *Blackwood's*.... LXXXII, 1857, pp. 607-608; White, p. 52; R. G. Wilberforce, *An Un-Recorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny, being the Personal Reminiscences of*.... (3rd ed.; Lond: 1895), p. 37.

these 44 were blown from the cannon, 459 were shot by musketry, and 20 were hanged.³⁶

The case of a Havildār at Peshawar further illustrates the grim determination of the sepoys to overthrow the Government. Having been convicted of "seditious correspondence with one of the hill tribes," the Havildār was "sentenced to be blown away." When tied up to the cannon, he was offered his life on the condition that he would turn "Queen's evidence, and give up the names of other traitors in his regiment," but in vain. From the ghastly scene of the execution an Englishman ruefully observed:

Faithless as he has been to us [the British], he was faithful to them [fellow conspirators]: he refused to reveal anything, and met his doom with a firmness worthy of a better cause.³⁷

By June 1857, most of the suspected regiments in the Panjab were either disarmed or disbanded, and —the province was secured as a base of operations against the rebels at Delhi.³⁸

Immediate efforts were also made to inveigle the "former enemies [the Sikhs] to cast in their lot with" the British, "at a time when an excellent opportunity presented itself for asserting their national independence." The credit for retaining the loyalty of Sikhs goes to Sir John Lawrence; but for his tactful handling of the situation, the Sikhs might have risen in revolt against their conquerors. However, the followers of Gūrū Nānak were allowed no time to think. Aided by his Sikh aide-de-camp, Sir John at once prepared a "list of all those Sikh chiefs who had suffered for the rebellion of 1848" and hurriedly addressed personal letters to all of them. The memos urged the Sikh nobility "to retrieve their character and come down at once with their retainers, naming the numbers to be brought by each."³⁹

36. Montgomery and Temple, p. 102; White, p. 57; Crawshaw, p. 19.

37. "A Few Words from the Khyber," *Blackwood's...* LXXXII., 1857, p. 610.

38. *Annual Register*, 18957, pp. 261-52.

39. *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, p. 97, cited in White, p. 46.

As the Sikh chiefs came accompanied by their attendants, they were organized into cavalry and quickly sent off to Delhi even before they could grasp the situation. The yearning of the vanquished Sikhs for arms, munitions, and horses had become so great during the past years of their deprivation that they were only too glad to have secured "any specimen of the old Sikh cavalry." In their delight at this partial military rehabilitation they forgot to think of their opportunity, and when they did, it was too late to retract. Thus, Lawrence shrewdly denied the Sikh nation its possible leaders in a possible insurrection against the British by pushing their chiefs against the walls of Delhi.⁴⁰ Indeed, this was a master stroke of Sir John's diplomacy.

Simultaneously, steps were also taken to secure the loyalty of the princes in the Panjab and its neighbourhood. To achieve this, Gölāb Singh of Kashmir was "cajoled into active allegiance"; Dōst Muhammad of Afghanistan was "subsidized into quiescence,"⁴¹ and the Nawāb of Bahawalpur was "intimidated into neutrality."⁴² Already kindly disposed, the allegiance of the Sikh ruler of Patiala was easily secured through the "judicious" efforts of Douglas Forsyth, Deputy Commissioner of Ambala, and George Barnes, Commissioner and Superintendent of Cis-Sutlej states. In addition to liberally providing the British with men, money, and materials of war, Raja Inder Singh took upon himself the responsibility of "guarding the out-stations, furnishing escorts for convoys of stores, protecting the country, cutting off stragglers, and even in recovering districts which had fallen into the hands of the rebels."⁴³

40. *Ibid.*

41. Cooper, p. 238, For similar information, see also: Cave-Browne, I, p. 151.

42. Cooper, p. 238. Cave-Browne, Chaplain of the Moveable Column in the Panjab described the Nawab of Bahawalpur as "an ally certainly, yet one mistrusted as dangerous and false." Actually, that prince is said to have ordered his troops to occupy Dera Ghazi Khan and then attack Multan, but was desisted from doing so by his Wazir. Cave-Browne, I, p. 122 and 122n.

43. Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny* (Two Vols.; Lond. and New York: [1858-59]), I, p. 127; Cave-Browne, II, p. 124n. The ruler of Patiala furnished the British with eight guns, 2,156 cavalry, 2846 infantry, and 40,000 pounds. Roberts, I, p. 103; Lieut.-Gen. McLeod Innes, *The Sepoy Revolt. A Critical Narrative* (Lond: 1897), p. 85.

The conduct of the ruler of Patiala, in turn, influenced the attitude of minor Sikh chiefs of Jheend, Nabha, Karnal, and Kapurthala, who were easily 'led to cast in their lot heartily with the British."⁴⁴

However, Hindu-Muslim masses, especially the latter, presented a difficult front. Every effort was made to obtain their good will; failing that coercion was used to intimidate them. Suspects were imprisoned *en masse* and were given exemplary punishments. Frederick Henry Cooper, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, wrote that

...no half measures were adopted. Moreover the principle that he who is not for us is against us was strictly followed. There was no pause. Treason and sedition were dogged into the very privacy of the Harem and up to the sacred sanctuaries of mosques and shrines. Learned *Moulvies* [Mawlawis, meaning Muslim priests or learned men] were seized in the midst of a croud of fanatic worshippers, and men of distinction and note were wanted at dead of night. Like sleuthhounds, the district police, on the first scent of treason, egged only by certainty of reward, fastened on the track, and left it not until the astonished intriguer was grounded in his lair.⁴⁵

A highly oppressive act was passed and vigorously enforced to curb the increasing turbulence in the province; Act XIV of 1857 empowered "any two officers sitting in Commission to try and execute any traitor."⁴⁶ Likewise, the police was exhorted to use their arms freely "against anyone found in the act of perpetrating violent crime."⁴⁷

Strict mail censorship was introduced in the Panjab; at "most places the district officers in person opened every post bag, and suppressed suspicious letters, especially those addressed to sepoys."⁴⁸ Licenses to carry fire arms were withdrawn and sale of lead and

44. Innes, p. 85. For similar information, see also; Roberts, I, p. 103; "The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Punjab—No. III," Blackwood's... LXXXIII, 1858, pp. 600-602; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 32-33.

45. Cooper, pp. 24-25.

46. Montgomery and Temple, p. 10.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

48. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 6, 19, 41, 46, and 37.

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sulphur were prohibited. Ferries were closely guarded, boats withdrawn, and free movement of people restricted.⁴⁹ Non-military Hindostanis in the Panjab were suspected of disloyalty to the Government; they were either closely watched or expelled from the province.⁵⁰ Above all, a ruthless system of collective responsibility and community punishment was instituted to subdue the province.⁵¹

No stone was left unturned to pacify the Panjab. This is evident from the treatment which the fugitives of the disarmed 26th N.I. Regiment received from Frederick Henry Cooper and the spontaneous approbation with which his barbaric cruelties were affirmed by the Government, especially by John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the province, and Robert Montgomery, the Judicial Commissioner. Of the 282 apprehended runaways, 237 were publicly shot in batches of ten each on August 1, 1857. It would be apt to reproduce part of the story in the language of the chief actor himself. He reports:

The climax of the fortunate coincidences seemed to have arrived when it was remembered that the 1st of August was the anniversary of the great Mohammedan sacrificial festival of the *Bukra Eid*. A capital excuse was thus afforded to permit the Hindostanee Mussulman horsemen to return to celebrate it at Umritsar [Amritsar]; while the single Christian unembarrassed by their presence, and aided by the faithful Sikh, might perform a ceremonial sacrifice of a different nature on the same morrow. When that morrow dawned, sentries were placed round the town to prevent the egress of sightseers. The officials were called and they were made aware of the character of the spectacle they were about to witness.

Ten by ten the sepoy were called forth. Their names having been taken down in succession, they were pinioned, linked together, and marched to execution; a firing party being in readiness. Every phase of deportment was manifested by the doomed men, after the sullen firing of the volleys of distant musketry forced the conviction of inevitable death; astonishment, rage, frantic despair, the most stoic calmness. One detachment, as they passed, yelled to the solitary Anglo-Saxon magistrate....that he, the Christian, would meet the same

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 42, 48, 57; Cotton, pp. 163-64; White, p. 52.

50. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 8, 42, 47, 57-58, and 170.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

fate; then as they passed the reserve of the young Sikh, who were to relieve the executioners after a certain period, they danced, though pinioned, insulted the Sikh religion, and called on Gangajee [the sacred Ganges river; sacred to the Hindus] to aid them....

At least one executioner swooned in the performance of this tragic drama. Of the 282, 45 escaped execution; they died of "fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat, and partial suffocation" in the small bastion in which they were huddled together a few hours before. The bodies of these 282 "martyrs" were, to the boast of Henry Cooper, an important member of the civil and judicial administration, judiciously "consigned in common...into one common pit, by the hands of the village sweepers." Cooper prided in his performance as that of a "single Christian" and a "solitary Anglo-Saxon." The praise was well deserved; he finished in one day what history took one hundred years to enact—successfully avenged Holwell's half-historical Blackhole of Calcutta and Nānā Sahib's well at Kanpur with the zeal of a religious fanatic.⁵²

Both Lawrence and Montgomery hurried to congratulate Cooper for his heroic performance. The latter jealously called it a "feather" in Cooper's cap as long as he lived and requested him to hound out all other stragglers and send them to Lahore. "You have had slaughter enough. We want a few for the troops here, and also for evidence". The request was faithfully granted; forty-one more fugitives were "gleaned" from the surrounding country and sent to Lahore where they were all blown to pieces along with a severely wounded man who earlier could not walk to the place of execution at Ajnala. Montgomery also requested Cooper to write an official report of his proceedings and list all men who performed their duties honestly:

Do this judiciously. I mean discriminate between the medium, the good and the super-excellent.

Again:

You will have abundant money to reward all, and the (executioners) Sikhs should have a good round sum given to them.⁵³

52. Cooper, pp. 161-67.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Steps were also taken to suppress the Fourth Estate in the Panjab. On May 23, 1857, strict censorship was imposed upon the native newspapers in Lahore Division. H. E. Perkins, Assist. Commissioner, Lahore, was enjoined to rigorously enforce the restrictions on the press.⁵⁴ At Peshawar the editor of the *Moortizae* was convicted for publishing treasonable matter and his paper was confiscated. Likewise, the publication of another newspaper was stopped at Multan. The editor of *Chesma-i-Feiz* was ordered to remove his head-quarters from Sialkot to Lahore, where his paper, together with two other newspapers of Lahore, "was put under rigid surveillance."⁵⁵

The oppressive steps taken by Sir John Lawrence provoked a strong protest from George Crawshay, a proprietor of the East India Company and Mayor of Gateshead. Crawshay criticized the Chief Commissioner for launching a "Reign of Terror" in the Panjab, matched only by its predecessor in Paris. He strongly opposed the grant of an annuity of 2,000 pounds to Sir John for his success in the Panjab. Crawshay maintained that Robespierre was also successful in France.⁵⁶

British position in the Panjab was also helped by the popularity of a number of English officials among the Sikhs. The humanity of Sir Henry Lawrence, Sir John's brother and predecessor in his office, had won him and his countrymen a good name among a cross section of the Sikhs. Sir Henry's kindness gave them such confidence in the Government that it could not be much impaired by the stern administration of his brother.⁵⁷ The "school of Henry Lawrence" included men like Lt.-Col. Nicholson, Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar. Nicholson's popularity with Sikhs earned him the place and respect of a saint; his followers lovingly called him "Nikkul Seyn Sā'in"⁵⁸ and even worshipped him.

54. Montgomery and Temple, p. 42.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7 and 83; PGRs MR, VIII. pt. II, pp. 202-203

56. Crawshay, p. 20.

57. Charles Raikes, *Notes on the Revolt in the North-Western Provinces of India* (Lond: 1858), pp. 20-37.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32; W. H. Fitchett, *The Tale of the Great Mutiny*. (Lond: 1901), pp. 296 and 324.

Evidently, Nikkul Sa'in was a corruption of Nicholson. Upon analysis, however, the Indianized form of Nicholson's name gives the following meanings.

This enabled Nicholson to render invaluable assistance to his countrymen during the crisis of 1857. Frontier soldiers in the "Mooltanee Horse" joined his ranks out of personal devotion. They asked for no emoluments and accepted nobody at their head except Nicholson. They fought valiantly in front of Delhi and played a highly important role in the reconquest of the city.⁵⁹

Above all, the Panjab was one of the greater hotbeds of religio-political strife in India. This greatly aided the British in their hold upon the province. Even an all-pervading spirit of disaffection against the British was sure to be weakened by the existing politico-military antagonism between the Sikhs and Hindostanis,⁶⁰ and the religio-political antipathy between the Sikhs and the Muslims. More important than these differences, however, is the fact that they were adroitly exploited by the British.⁶¹

a) Nikkul: It is generally used as a corrupt form of the Indian name Nakkul, which means: the fourth son of Pāndu, a son (*Bhargava's Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language*, Hindi-English Edition); name of a people in Maha Bharata; name of a plant, supposed to furnish with an antidote when bitten by a snake (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*).

b) Sā'in: A Darwesh, a holy man, a saintly person, a saint; a beggar.

One wonders if there was any connection between the Indian name of Nicholson and the reverence he received from his followers.

59. Wilberforce, pp. 27-30.

Nicholson was so popular among his followers that when some of them heard of his death in Hazara district, "they came together to lament, and one of them stood forth and said there was no gain from living in a world that no longer had 'Nikalsain.' So he cut his throat deliberately and died. The others, however, reflected that this was not the way to serve their guru; they must learn to worship 'Nikalsain's God' and the entire group actually accepted Christianity on the evidence of Nicholson's personality!" Fitchett, p. 324.

60. Cave-Browne, I, p. 146n; Holmes, p. 311; Sir Orfeur Cavenagh. *Reminiscences of an Indian Official* (Lond.: 1884), p. 208, *The Examiner*, Oct. 17, 1857; *People's Paper*, Sept. 26, 1857, and Jan. 2, 1858.

The following instance would help to indicate the extent to which the Sikhs disliked the Hindustanis. After the 1,500 soldiers of the 33rd N. I. and 35th L. I. regiments had been disarmed at Philor, an old Sikh went to Capt. Farrington and remarked:

You have to-day drawn the fangs of 1500 snakes; truly your *ikhbal* [Iqbal] (good fortune) is great. Cave-Browne, I, p. 303.

61. *Manchester Guardian*, Oct. 31, 1857.

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The bitterness between the Sikhs and the Muslims dated back to the time of Aurangzēb. It was believed that the head of Gūrū Tēg Bahādūr was exposed in Delhi by the orders of that sovereign. Consequently, the Sikhs nursed a grudge against the co-religionists of Aurangzēb and squarely avenged themselves upon their Muslim subjects in the Panjab. However, this does not seem to have fully satisfied them.

In 1857 a prophecy was ripe among the followers of Gūrū Tēg Bahādūr that they would attack Delhi with the help of the white man and completely avenge the old insult. The British who seem to have initiated the prophecy were, of course, most willing to gratify their new allies. In order to please the Sikhs, Capt. Hodson's Horse "deliberately shot" and killed two Mughal princes after having promised them safe conduct. Thereafter, he ordered their bodies to be taken into Delhi and put on public display at the same place where the head of Tēg Bahādūr was supposed to have been exposed over a century and a half before. After three days Hodson ordered the corpses to be removed for sanitary reasons.⁶²

As expected, the murder of the Mughal princes very much appeased the Sikh "national Nemesis," so observed the Rev. Cave-Browne, Chaplain of the Moveable Column in the Panjab.⁶³ Henceforth, the followers of Tēg Bahādūr regarded Capt. Hodson as an "avenger of their martyred Gooroo [Gūrū]" and were more ready than ever before to "follow him anywhere."⁶⁴ No wonder, Sikhs fought valiantly everywhere; they were rightly regarded among the saviours of British India.

The above discussion is apt to give one the impression that the entire province of Panjab was either loyal to the British or was forced into acquiescence. This, however, was not completely the case. It was not true even in the case of the entire Sikh

62. Maj. W. S. R. Hodson, *Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India*, ed. by the Rev. George H. Hodson (2nd. ed.; Lond: 1859), p. 302. For similar information, see also: Cave-Browne, I, p. 296.

63. Cave-Browne, II, p. 194.

64. Hodson, p. 302n.

population. There did exist a sullen discontent among the people, which was sure to overflow the limits of patience had the native army in the province been able to play the political role which its counterpart did in Central India, or, had the province been administered by less competent men like Colvin, Anson, and the like. Though all these factors did not exist and though Panjab did save India, still the picture was certainly not as rosy as many tried to depict. Several sections of the Panjabis, especially Muslims, were highly disaffected. Whenever and wherever an opportunity presented itself they invariably availed themselves of it and did so heartily.

Both the Central and the Panjab governments were deeply concerned about the loyalty of the Muslims in the province.⁶⁵ Long before the uprising of May 10, 1857, the *First Punjab Report* had clearly expressed its fears on the allegiance and continued faithfulness of the followers of Islam. Speaking hopefully of other components of the Panjabi population, the *Report* maintained that

...the pure Mussulman races, descendants of Arab conquerors of Asia, retain much of the ferocity, bigotry, and independence of ancient days. They look upon the Empire as their heritage, and consider themselves as foreigners settled in the land for the purpose of ruling it. They hate every dynasty except their own, and regard the British as the worst because the most powerful of usurpers.⁶⁶

As a result, the Panjab administration took special safety measures in Muslim neighborhoods to prevent possible uprisings, but not always with success.

Frederick Cooper, Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar, reports that the Muslims of Lahore were fully alive to the situation in India and were maintaining a close watch on the activities of the British

65. *PGR*: MR, VIII, pt I, pp. 61 and 68; Cave-Browne, II, p. 271;

66. *First Punjab Report*, p. 5, cited in "India under Lord Dalhousie," *Blackwood's*., LXXX, 1856 pp. 254-55. For a similar opinion, see also: Cave-Browne, I, p. 234.

After the suppression of the revolt as well, the Panjab Government declared the outbreak to be essentially of "Hindustanee and Mohammedan origin: the Mohammedans they regarded as the instigators, and Hindoos as the dupes." Cave-Browne, I, p. 271.

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officials.⁶⁷ Richard Temple, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner for the Panjab, disclosed that the Muslim priests in Lahore did actually set up a plan to overthrow the Government. In order to achieve their objective they tried to enlist the sympathies of native civil officials. The project included the murder of principal European officials at the station. The killings were expected to enable the army and the people to rise *en masse*.

Seditious meetings were held on religious pretensions; mosques were freely used for political preaching, and the faithful were exhorted "on the duty of rebellion." The situation seems to have gained such an enormity that Temple was forced to take action. He "herded together" all the priests in the courtyard of a principal mosque and warned them that the "Government would not suffer the use of mosques to be perverted for the profane purpose of sedition."⁶⁸

Likewise, at Ferozepore Mawlawīs "openly preached a crusade in the bazars" and in the mosques. Their desperate determination was in clear evidence when they publicly tampered with the loyalty of the 45th N. I. Regiment at a time that corps was marching through the city under the watchful eyes of British officers. In this case, city Banyās also joined hands with the Muslim priests. The situation was brought under control with difficulty and after blood was shed.⁶⁹

More trouble was to follow elsewhere in the district; another revolt and a serious one—purely civil—was in the making. The middle of June saw a Hindu Faqīr, Shām Dās, raising the standard of rebellion in the nearby loyal state of Nabha. Before anything could be done by the Government, Shām Dās had rallied around him a following of four to five thousand insurgents. The strength of rebels and their turbulence posed a great threat to

67. Cooper, p. 20.

68. Sir Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India* (2nd. Thousand; Lond: 1882, p. 158.

69. PGRs MR, VIII, pt. I, p. 117; Cooper, pp. 13-14; Cave-Browne, I, p. 108

the district. A wing of the 10th L. C. Regiment and two guns were rushed in advance. Finally, calm was restored after a strong show of force by Maj. Von Cortlandt; a number of rebels were killed in the encounter and their leader was executed.⁷⁰

Thirty-two miles to the north-east of Lahore, the situation in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar was still worse. Frederick Cooper, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, reports that Muslim rebels operated in the city in the guise of Fakirs. One of them, Nūr Muhammad Khan, came from Delhi to launch what Cooper called a "crusade" against the British. When apprehended, a number of "suits of Fakeers' clothes and disguises" were discovered in his possession for use in emergency. Consequently, emphasized Cooper, the "shops of Elahee and Nubee Bush [Muslim stores], as familiar in India as Moses and Son in England, ... became arenas of political discussion. The Delhi, Bareilly, and Shahjahanpur massacres were freely discussed, and the necessity of imitation became a matter of commonplace talk." The efforts of these messengers from Delhi were not confined to their co-religionists; attempts were also made to gain the confidence of the Sikhs. They spread the story of cow-bones and instigated the followers of Gūrū Nānak to make it into "a *causus belli*" against the British.⁷¹

Cooper also uncovered a "very desperate" Muslim conspiracy, which included native officials of the district court. The prime objective of the plan was to massacre the entire European population of Amritsar; Cooper was to have been the first victim.⁷² In fact, Amritsar Muslims were so emotion-charged that they also insulted and threatened the native Christians for their complicity with the British.⁷³ Desperate remedies enabled Cooper and his colleagues to subdue the rising turbulence at Amritsar.

70. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 16-17; Cave-Browne, II, pp. 80-81.

71. Cooper, pp. 33-34.

72. "The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Punjab—No. IV," *Blackwood's*... LXXXIII, 1858, p. 653; Cave-Browne, I, p. 234n. The Rev. Cave-Browne reported that "being purely Mohammedan," the conspiracy "was disclosed by some Sikhs."

73. Sir Joseph Kingsmill, *British Rule and British Christianity in India* (Lond: 1859), p. 69; "The Crisis in India," *Church of England Magazine*, XLIII, p. 196; Cooper, pp. 33-34.

In eastern Panjab, the people of Ludhiana resorted to a novel method. They petitioned the restored monarch at Delhi to rescue them from the tyranny of the British rule.⁷⁴ The entire city of Ludhiana seemed to be disaffected, especially the Muslims. Infused with sense of "fellow feeling," the rebels were led by one Mawlawī 'Abdul Qādir, described by G. Ricketts, Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, as "a most troublesome man." Twice before the actual uprising at Ludhiana, 'Abdul Qādir had "raised the city into a ferment." The arrival of mutineers from Jallandhar on June 9, 1857, set the already tense situation aflame. Headed by Qādir, the rebel citizenry gave a rousing reception to the sepoys and guided them in the task of plunder and devastation. Together, they attacked the houses of the British officials, burnt the mission church, the school house, the library and the book-depot, released the prisoners, and marched off to Delhi.⁷⁵

The "ill-famed and troublesome city" of Ludhiana did not go unpunished; it soon felt the "first stroke of the iron rod with which Mr. G. Ricketts quelled the disturbances in his district, and won for himself the well-deserved reputation." Cooper maintained that the name of Ricketts soon became a byword for "terror" with the people of Ludhiana.⁷⁶ The timely arrival of a body of loyal Sikh soldiers enabled Ricketts to chastise the people of Ludhiana and its suburbs. Door to door search for concealed arms yielded eleven cart-loads of weapons in the city. Consequently, the city and the district were completely disarmed. Heavy fines were imposed upon the inhabitants of Ludhiana and a good number of them had to pay the penalty with their lives.⁷⁷

74. Cooper, p. 41.

75. PGR: MR, VIII, pt. 1, p. 138; The Rev. Mathew A. Sherring, *The Indian Church during the Great Rebellion: An Authentic Narrative of Disasters that befell it; its Sufferings; and Faithfulness unto Death, of many of its European and Native Members* (Lond: 1859), pp. 319-20; Holmes, p. 331; Cave-Browne, I, p. 263.

76. Cooper, p. 41. For similar information, see also: Cave-Browne, I, pp. 263-64.

77. Sherring, p. 320; Col. John Chalmers, *Letters Written from India during the Mutiny and Waziri Campaigns* (Eding: 1904), p. 19; Holmes, p. 332; Cave-Browne, I, p. 264; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 21-23; PGR: MR, VIII, pt. I, p. 132.

Eighty-two miles north of Lahore, the uprising at Sialkot was long in planning. The Darogha of the city jail worked closely with the 9th Cavalry long before the actual revolt. The domestic servants at the station were mentioned as a "privy to the whole plot." In some cases even fifteen to twenty years service was disregarded.⁷⁸ As soon as the conspiracy came to fruition on July 9, 1857, and the native regiments at Sialkot mutinied, the city and its neighboring areas "emptied their hordes upon the ill-fated" Sialkot cantonment and "left it a complete wreck."⁷⁹ While Col. Farquharson and Capt. Caulfield were offered high salaries if they would consent to lead the mutineers, Brig. Brind, Dr. Gorham, Capt. Bishop, and others were murdered.⁸⁰ The Rev. Hunter and his family were said to have been murdered by "Fanatical" Muslims.⁸¹ Sialkot cooks, on the other hand, attempted to poison an entire regiment loyal to the British. The timely prick to the conscience of one of the accomplices avoided "the wholesale murder." The "renegade" went to Nicholson and informed him of the misdeed; it was soon discovered that the soup contained aconite.⁸³ Finally, it was the patent punishment of fines and a free use of ropes and guns that brought order to this revolt-torn city and the surrounding villages.⁸³

Up in the hills of west Panjab, the position of the British was far from enviable. Muslim tribesmen at Murree hatched a conspiracy with the help of native servants of European household. The combination spread as far as Hazara and Rawalpindi.⁸⁴ "The people of that country [north-western Panjab], who were all Mahomedans, were doubtless ripe for an outbreak. The success of the mutineers at Delhi, and the hopes thereby inspired of restoring

78. PGR: MR, VIII, pt. I, p. 226; "The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Punjab—No. V," *Blackwood's...*, LXXXIV, 1858, p. 34.

79. Cooper, p. 140; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 4 and 51; Cave-Browne, II, pp. 68-69.

80. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 49-50.

81. Sherring, p. 326. The Rev. Cave-Browne, on the other hand, holds that the assassins were Chaprasis (peons). He, however, fails to specify their religion. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 64-65.

82. Wilberforce, p. 91.

83. "The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Punjab—No. V" *Blackwood's...*, LXXXIV, 1858, p. 34; Montgomery and Temple, p. 52.

84. Cooper, p. 118; Roberts, I, p. 214.

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Mahomedan power, had offered irresistible temptation."⁸⁵ The scheme of the conspirators, however, could not be translated into action. Hakīm khān, a personal attendant of Lady Lawrence then residing at Murree, divulged the entire plot. Consequently, when the rebels descended upon Murree, they found the British on their "*qui vive*." Only a few skirmishes assured the leaders of the revolt of the futility of fighting against a technologically superior and highly disciplined enemy. They desisted from an open attack and retired. Two British-trained Hindostani doctors were found deeply involved in the entire conspiracy; they were executed along with several others.⁸⁶

Further away at Peshawar there was every possibility of 50,000 inhabitants of the city and the entire population of Peshawar valley joining in an armed uprising with the army. The situation was so grave that Gen. Sir Sydney Cotton, Commander at Peshawar, observed:

This is a fact worthy of special notice, because it tends to show that the author's position at Peshawar was entirely surrounded by combinations in front, on both flanks, and in the rear, indeed in every direction, requiring the strictest surveillance.

Seditious letters having been intercepted and emissaries detected, a "passport system and a strict system of espionage were adopted at all passages leading into the Peshawar valley."⁸⁷ Extreme vigilance, timely disarming of native regiments, exemplary punishments of the guilty and, above all, the presence of two European regiments and artillery, denied the rebels and mutineers the opportunity to revolt.⁸⁸

One hundred and forty miles south of Lahore, the Muslims of Gogira district revolted and for a while threatened the British fortunes in that quarter. The rebellion started on September 17, 1857 (the third day of the final and successful assault on Delhi), quickly engulfed the important stations of Kamalia, Tolumbia,

85. Montgomery and Temple, p. 184.

86. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 224-26; Cooper, p. 118; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 58-59; Roberts, I, pp. 214-15; Innes, pp. 138 and 192.

87. Cotton pp. 163.64. For similar information, see also: White, p. 52.

88. Roberts, I, p. 64; Holmes, p. 323; Cave-Browne, I, pp. 153-54.

Chichawatni, Shorkote, Harappa, and Pakpattan.⁸⁹ Ahmad khān Khral, the mastermind behind this uprising, was reported to have been in "constant communication with the rebels of Delhi and Hansi, and . . . with the King of Delhi himself." He publicly renounced his allegiance to the British and claimed to fight under the orders of Bahādur Shāh. Other Muslim chiefs listed in the rebellion included several Wattō leaders, Mīr Bahāwal of Fatyāna tribe, and Muhammad Khān of Kāthiā clan. Mīr Bahāwal was described as the "greatest among them [the rebels], the bravest, and [the] most influential" person. "In their Mohammedan fanaticism," the rebels sought to restore Muslim supremacy over India.⁹⁰ They killed Lt. Neville as he proceeded down the river Sutlej on his way to Bombay and forced the Government to impose restrictions upon the movement of Europeans along that river. Likewise, regular dispatch of mail between Lahore, Multan, and Bombay had to be suspended.⁹¹

Captain Fraser having been sent to suppress the revolt failed to achieve satisfactory results. Lt. Berkeley, Assist. Commissioner of Gogira, was killed in one of the battles. The strength of the rebels was estimated at several thousands. Muslim women were also sighted in action, "moving along the tops of the houses with their skirts stretched out, so as to cover the matchlockmen as they crept about from point to point."⁹² A much more determined and co-ordinated effort was needed to suppress the revolt. Consequently, reinforcements were rushed from all possible quarters, i.e., Jhang, Leiah, and repeatedly from Lahore and Multan. Still the insurgents held out; even the fall of Delhi failed to discourage them. The town of Kamalia twice changed hands between the patriots and the British. It was not until the month of November (more than six weeks after the fall of Delhi) that the backbone of the revolt was broken. Muhammad Khān, Mīr Bahāwal, and several other lesser

89. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 200-223; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 4-5, 69, and 74; Roberts, I, pp. 214-15; Innes, pp. 138 and 192.

90. Cave-Browne, II, p. 203-204, and 214; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 76-79; PGR: MR, VII, pt. II, pp. 42, 44, and 72.

91. Montgomery and Temple, pp. 4-5, and 69; *The Scotsman*, Oct. 28, 1857; *The Spectator*, Jan. 2, 1858; The Rev. Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion; its Causes and Results in a Series of Letters from.....* (Lond: 1858), p. 259.

92. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 204-208; Montgomery and Temple, p. 77.

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surrendered to Maj. Hamilton; Ahmad Khān had died in action earlier.⁹³ Complete suppression of the Gogira revolt was followed by swift retribution. Apart from 2,300 heads of cattle and "thousands of sheep and goats" seized toward the end of the revolt, the rebels had to pay 15,000 pounds in property confiscation and 25,000 pounds in fines.⁹⁴

Toward Delhi, the districts of Hariana, Hansi, Hissar, and Sirsa were thoroughly disaffected. In complete sympathy with the rebels and mutineers, the people of these counties of the Panjab "declared for the cause of the King of Delhi," and revolted almost simultaneously.⁹⁵ British authority suffered one of its most serious setbacks in this part of the Panjab. Thousands of Bhatīs and Gūjars joined the standard of rebellion. The name and sight of a Briton was an anathema to the rebels. Consequently, those Europeans who escaped the upheavals at Delhi were most barbarously treated by the people of these districts. Indian Christians who were considered staunch allies of the British were forced to share in their lot with the Europeans. The aversion to British rule grew so strong that the people of Sirsa trespassed the limits of human decency and ravaged the local Christian cemetery. Several engagements and highly repressive measures, including destruction of villages, were needed to bring calm to the area.⁹⁶

93. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 209-223; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 76-78.

The list of following officers who led and supervised the operations against Gogira rebels does, in some measure, indicate the extent of the revolt. It included: Maj. Hamilton, Commissioner of Multan Division; Mr. Robertson, Commissioner of Lahore Division; Mr. R. E. Egerton, Deputy Commissioner of Lahore; Lt.-Col. Paton; Maj. Crawford Chamberlain; Maj. F. W. Voyle; D. C. of Multan; Maj. Jackson; Maj. Marsden; Capt. Balmain; Capt. Hockin; Capt. Tronson; Capt. Cureton; Capt. Fraser; Capt. Denniss; Capt. Snow; Capt. McAndrews; Capt. Black; Lt. Pearse; Lt. Lane; Lt. Chichester; Lt. Elphinstone; Lt. Berkley, Assist. Commissioner of Gogira, and Lt. Mitchels. PGR: MR, VIII, pt. II, pp. 41-789; Montgomery and Temple, pp. 70-80.

94. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 218 and 223n; Montgomery and Temple, p. 79.

95. [Col. George Bruce Malleon], *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army* (Lond: 1858), p. 197.

96. "The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Punjab—No. IV," *Blackwood's...*, LXXXIII, 1858, pp. 653-54; PGR: MR, VIII, pt. I, pp. 156, 172, and 184; Cooper, pp. 16-17; Cave-Browne, I, p. 227.

The situation in the adjacent districts of Panipat, Rohtak and Karnal was still worse, Panipat occupied a highly important position on the road to Delhi. Every time European or loyal native regiments passed through this city, its dwellers jeered at the British officers and threw stones and bricks at them. Brute force was employed to curb this deep-seated hostility, and the city was disarmed. It seems that the rural population in these districts expressed greater ill-will toward the British than the townspeople. A British soldier deplored the extreme hostility evinced by village people all along his regiment's march from Panipat to Raei. In consequence, a large number of villages were burnt, and their headmen were hanged—seven of them at one place.⁹⁷

The Ambala army went through similar situations on its march from Rohtak to Delhi; the inhabitants of the roadside villages freely expressed their hatred of the British and fired at the soldiers. In this case, the British could not even punish the insurgents; they "did not feel strong enough to enter these villages and demand water, although much in need of it": therefore there was no question of chastising the rebels.⁹⁸ The situation in the district of Rohtak kept deteriorating and it became difficult to maintain the line of communications with Ambala and Lahore. In July, 1857, Capt. Hughes of the 1st Panjab Cavalry was sent against the rebels. His appearance in the district, however, produced a reverse effect; instead of frightening the turbulent spirits away, it quickly brought thousands of rebels into the field. Repeated encounters were fought, and the city of Rohtak changed hands a number of times. The rebels suffered heavy casualties, but it was not until late August that calm was restored in the district.⁹⁹

Muslim princes in the Panjab fully shared the general antipathy toward the British. The Nawāb of Jhajjar, whose house was a creation of the British and who was regarded as an "avowed friend of the English Government," presented himself at Delhi on May 11,

97. "The First Bengal European Fusiliers in the Delhi Campaign," Blackwood's....., LXXXIII, 1858, p. 122; Col. Thomas N. Walker, *Through the Mutiny: Reminiscences of Thirty Years' Active Service and Sport in India* (Lond: 1907), p. 33; *The Press*, Aug. 8, 1857; *The Spectator*, Aug. 8, 1857.

98. Walker, p. 40.

99. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 142-48.

1857, and offered his allegiance to Bahādur Shāh. He is not only said to have taken his seat beside the Mughal Emperor and made offerings to him, but is also reported to have "sent his troops into the city to fight the English." Likewise, the nawābs of Dadree and Runeea were found deeply involved on the side of the rebels. In line with the British tradition, all three of them had to pay the penalty with their lives.¹⁰⁰

Thus, large parts of the Panjab were either seething with a spirit of discontent or were in actual revolt against the British. The situation became more and more tense every day. The ability of Delhi to withstand the British siege for such a long time prompted second thoughts among many loyal Panjabis. Even non-Muslims began to show a spirit of increasing restlessness and the most faithfully disposed started to question, speculate and waver. Toward the end of July, Rām Parshād, described as an old Hindu priest at Lahore and a man reputed for his sanctity, wealth, and understanding of the British, wrote a highly seditious letter to the chief priest of Patiala. In his letter Rām Parshād urged his counterpart in the Sikh State "to use all his influence to alienate his chief from the 'unclean cow-slaying English'." The letter emphasized that "every hill raja and rana were ready to rise and looked only to their liege lord [the Prince of Patiala] for the signal." Fortunately for the British, the letter was intercepted at Ambala post-office and forwarded to George Barnes, Commissioner of Cis-Sutlej States. While Rām Parshād was at once seized, "brought down to Umballa, tried, convicted, and hanged," the British also took immediate measures to reassure themselves of the loyalty of Patiala and other princes.¹⁰¹

Partāp Singh, the pretender to the throne of Kulu, and Nahur Singh, Rājā of Ballabgarh, however, actually took to

100. Cave-Browne, I, pp. 226-27, and II, pp. 232-36 and 274-75; Montgomery and Temple, p. 17. Nur Samad Khan, Nawab of Runeea, declared for the King of Delhi and proclaimed himself as his governor of Sirsa.

Ahmad Ali Khan, Nawab of Karnal, seems to have been the only Muslim prince in the Panjab who remained loyal to the British. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 142-43 and 143n.

101. Cave-Browne, II, pp. 96-97 and 97n.



the field. Quite naturally, both of them were sentenced to be hanged.¹⁰²

As a matter of fact, it was discovered that a Sikh insurrection was being discussed and inquiries were being made "for leaders to take advantage of this opportunity. But none could be found. They were at Delhi...." Several intercepted letters of Sikh chiefs, who had earlier committed themselves on the side of the British at the manoeuvring of Sir John Lawrence, revealed that they were painfully conscious of the "mistake they had made."¹⁰³ Thus, it is not surprising when one reads about the growing Sikh consciousness of the value of their help to the Government and the consequent insubordination of Sikh soldiers in the British army. They openly discussed their misfortune in not having a capable leader to lead them against the British.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, the bond of Sikh loyalty to the British was far from durable. The curious fact is that the first man hanged for sedition in the Panjab was a Sikh civilian at Raupur in the district of Ambala. Many people in the very loyal state of Patiala opposed the pro-British policies pursued by its prince.¹⁰⁵ To be sure, it was the Sikh hatred of the Muslims and the Hindustanis rather than affection for the British, their conviction in the military superiority of the British and, above all, their love of plunder which had taken them to Delhi and elsewhere. The memory of their decade old defeats by the British assured them that this time too their own victors were going to carry the day; the Sikhs certainly wanted to join the winning side. The Rev. J. E. W. Rotton, chaplain of the besieging army at Delhi, observed that the Sikhs "were willing to serve... [the English], as long as they could serve themselves at the same time."¹⁰⁶

102. 'The Poorbeah Mutiny: The Panjab—No. V,' *Blackwood's*...., LXXXIV, 1858, pp. 40-41; Cave-Browne, I, pp. 304-308, and II, pp. 235-36.

103. *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, p. 97, cited in White, p. 46.

104. Col. Francis Cornwallis Maude, *Memories of the Mutiny* (Two Vols.; Lond: 1894), I, p. 31; *The Future of India* (Lond: L. Booth, 1859, pp. 7-8.

105. Forsyth, p. 31; Russell, II, p. 252; Roberts, I, p. 103.

106. The Rev. J. E. W. Rotton, *The Chaplain's Narrative of the Siege of Delhi* (Lond: 1858) pp. 224-25; Maude, I, p. 31; *Peoples's Paper*, Jan. 2, 1858.

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Under these circumstances, it was genuinely felt in the official circles that a persistent stand by Delhi was sure to erode the remaining loyalty of the thus-far loyal civilian population and, above all, of the Panjabi regiments.¹⁰⁷ Already, continued British failure at Delhi had consumed much of the Sikh loyalty.¹⁰⁸ Capt. Hodson observed before Delhi:

If we fail here at Delhi, not a soul in the Punjab or Upper Provinces would be safe for a day.¹⁰⁹

During the month preceding the recapture of Delhi several unseemly signs "had manifested themselves in the Punjab"—manifestations which were sure to multiply every week and every day Delhi remained untaken. Immediate reduction of Delhi was, therefore, felt to be the most pressing need of the hour; that alone could restore the shaky confidence of the staggering elements in the land of five rivers.¹¹⁰

Consequently, Sir John Lawrence never lost any "opportunity of impressing upon General Wilson the danger of the impromptitude in action and the absolute necessity for immediately striking a decisive blow" against Delhi.¹¹¹ The situation seems to have become so desperate that the Chief Commissioner gave 20th September as a warning date for reducing Delhi; failing that, he cautioned, he would not be able to hold Panjab.¹¹² To achieve this Lawrence took every conceivable step in his power. He set up a military base for the siege of Delhi at Ambala—a distance of one hundred miles—and kept vigilant watch over this important line of communications.¹¹³ He denuded the Panjab of as much of native and European army as possible and sent practically every loyal native soldier under the walls of Delhi.¹¹⁴ If needed, he was even prepared

107. This was a very widely-held opinion.

108. For detailed information on the feelings of the Sikh community, read; Cave-Browne, II, pp. 127-29.

109. Hodson, p. 224.

110. Temple, (Lond: Second Thousand, 1882), p. 147. For similar information, see also: Rotton, p. 222; Cave-Browne, II, p. 97.

111. Rotton, p. 222.

112. Wilberforce, p. 206.

113. Fitchett, p. 270.

114. Temple, (Lond: Second Thousand, 1882), p. 147; Fitchett, p. 270; Cave-Browne, II, p. 130.

to surrender Peshawar to Dōst Muhammad of Kaul "in order to ensure the capture of the imperial city."¹¹⁵ As late as July 24, 1857, Sir John wrote to Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of Peshawar Division:

If matters do not prosper, if more aid be required and Government leave the matter with me, I will recall all the troops from Kohat and send every man we can spare, which be the greater part of the Europeans and all the Punjaubis to Delhi.¹¹⁶

In short, just about the time when the Panjab was getting ready to rise, a singular event in the history of the Indian "mutiny" changed the whole trend of events in that province. Delhi fell on Sunday, September 20, 1857, and took the teeth out of growing opposition in the Panjab. The fall of this metropolitan city of Mughal India was announced with a "royal salute...fired at all principal stations in the Punjab"; the capture of Delhi made Panjab safe for the British.¹¹⁷

From the above discussion it is obvious that the Panjab was not as loyal to the British as it is often depicted. It has been fashionable among the British and the people of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent to refer to the Panjab as a faithful British pocket, the one doing so with a sense of joy, satisfaction, and achievement, and the other with a feeling of dismay, disdain, and injured pride. The facts, however, are contrary to such a belief, based as it seems to be on, (a) an inadequate knowledge of the situation in the Panjab from June to November 1857, and (b) upon official bulletins issued by the Government of Sir John Lawrence, bulletins like, "The Punjab perfectly quiet," "All well in the Punjab,"¹¹⁸ calculated to nourish the weakening British authority in India, especially in the Panjab, and also to discourage further uprisings.

115. White, p. 45. For similar information, see also: Fitchett, p. 271; Cave-Browne, II, p. 45.

116. *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, p. 153, quoted by White, pp. 45-46.

117. Cave-Browne, II, p. 199.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 47. The Rev. Cave-Browne maintained that these bulletins "told only half the truth; and perhaps less.

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Just because the Panjab supplied men, money, and materials—the much needed sinews of war—to the British does not mean that this represented the sentiments of the Panjabis as a whole. The pro-British leanings of Sikh princes were not even shared by their civil and military populations, still less by the general mass of people in the rest of Panjab. The scattered uprisings in the districts of Panipat, Rohtak, Hissar, Hansi, Sirsa, Hariana, Ludhiana, Sialkot, Ferozepore, Murree and Gogira, and sullen discontent at Lahore, Amritsar, and elsewhere, strongly refute the myth of popular support received by the British in the Panjab during the revolt.

The critical nature of the situation in the province conspicuously stands out by the fact that even the absence of leaders, of finances, of arms and munitions proper means of communications, the presence in the province of an artillery-equipped large European army and, above all unleashing of a "Reign of Terror" by the administration of Sir John Lawrence, one and all proved insufficient to curb the anti-British sentiments of Panjabis. Whenever and wherever possible, the people of the Panjab successfully defied authority and did so in the face of condign punishments. In this situation, had Delhi been able to withstand the siege for another month or so, the history of India might have been written differently. There would have been revolts everywhere in the Panjab; the majority of Muslims would have been up in arms. There was a strong possibility as well of the Sikhs withdrawing their support of the British and throwing their weight behind the insurgents. The widow of Ranjit Singh was already said to be fomenting strife "among the Puniabi troops quartered in Oudh and the Sikhs in the Puniab itself."¹¹⁹ Earlier, the Ludhiana Sikh corps had defected to the rebels.¹²⁰

At such a juncture, the fall of Delhi on 20th September was highly untimely: it broke the backbone of the growing opposition to the British in the Panjab. If the rebels in the province were discouraged, the wavering elements at once hurried to reaffirm

119. Temple (Lond: Second Thousand, 1882), p. 150.

120. Maude, I, p. 31.

their loyalty to the Government. The worst wound, however, was inflicted by Bahādur Shāh when he and his family surrendered to Capt. Hodson. The last representative of the House of Timūr was a prisoner in the hands of the British. All hopes of a Mughal revival suddenly vanished. For some time the Gogira rebels tried to keep the spark alive but to no purpose; within the next two months they threw down their arms and surrendered to the British. In the end, it would be appropriate to say that it was Sir John Lawrence and his team who secured the fall of Delhi; the fall of Delhi, in turn, preserved the Panjab for the British.

Sir William Wedderburn — A Towering Congressman in England during 1885-1900

BY

HARISH P. KAUSHIK

The history of the Indian National movement is studded with some precious jewels still hidden and uncared for. Sir William Wedderburn^{*} is one among the personalities whose services and dedication to India's cause are little known. Retired from the Indian Civil Service in 1887, this liberal-minded Englishman was equally concerned about the political unrest in India. Like Allan Octavian Hume, he too desired that the history of 1857 should not be repeated.¹ Therefore he shared the efforts of Hume, and helped him in forming the Indian National Congress in 1885. He supported the Indian national movement initiated by the Congress, and worked for it wholeheartedly. He was elected the President of this national body for two sessions i.e. 1889 and 1910. As an active worker of the Indian National Congress, he identified himself with the Indian struggle for freedom from British rule. This British liberal leader championed the Indian cause, and pleaded for its fulfilment till the close of his eventful life in 1918.

However, much of his work for India's cause was carried on in England rather than in India. The early Congressmen were of the view that if the British Parliament and the British people were acquainted properly with the Indian affairs and aspirations, the Indian problems would be solved. It was further considered that England was the real seat of power,² and Indian agitation by the Congress would be carried on free from the atmosphere of doubts and suspicion of the British. The only way to get

1. Gupta, D. C.: *Indian National Movement* (Delhi, 1970) p. 34.

2. Vide. *Report of the Indian National Congress*, 6th session Calcutta, 1890, p. 65: Speech of Narendranath Sen.

them heard in sympathy, therefore, lay in pressing the British nation for their demands. With this object the Congress established its regular branch in London popularly known as the British Congress Committee.³ Sir William Wedderburn was appointed its first Chairman, and he retained this office till his death.⁴ The other members of the Committee were William Digby (Secretary), W. S. Caine, M.P., J. E. Ellis, M.P., W. S. Bright, Mc Laren, M.P., Dadabhai Naoroji, W. C. Bonnerjee, C. E. Schwann, M.P., A. O. Hume, Herbert Roberts, M.P. and several other British publicmen and members of Parliament.

This Committee was to keep the Congress in India informed of Indian affairs in England, and to advise about the policies that required to be formulated, and the measures that ought to be taken. Moreover it was to carry on propaganda in England to advance India politically. At first the British Committee maintained correspondence with the Indian Congress leaders. Members of this Committee visited India and presided over or attended the sessions of the Indian National Congress.⁵ The second object was served by a war of the Committee for Indian reforms on three major fronts—Parliament, Platform and the Press. Interchange of British and Indian leaders was also considered to be one of the various methods to get the demands fulfilled. To maintain this British work, the Indian National Congress contributed a sum of nearly half a lakh of rupees each year.⁶ Sir Wedderburn along with other patriots like Dadabhai Naoroji and A. O. Hume maintained the expenses of the Committee out of his pocket. He handed over every year his whole

3. Vide, *Minutes of the British Congress Committee*, July 27, 1889 (Volume June 1889-October 1890).

4. Dr. Garisan Brown Clark was member of the British Congress Committee since its inception and succeeded Wedderburn as Chairman in 1918. He continued in the post till the Committee was officially closed down in 1920.

5. Among notables included Charles Bradlaugh, W. S. Caine, C. E. Schwann, G. B. Clark, Samuel Smith, Keir Hardie, H. W. Nevinnson and many others.

6. Vide, *Department of Home* (Public—A) Progs. 272-75 of January 1890—Congress Resolution XIII (f). Rs. 40,000 in 1890 & 91, from 1893 to 1898 the grant amounted to Rs. 68,000 per year, Rs. 58,000 in 1899 but the grant was reduced in the successive years. It was Rs. 30,000 in 1900, Rs. 10,500 in 1903 & £ 700 in 1904.

pension of £1000 a year towards the amount spent in England for Congress propaganda.

The object in establishing the London branch of the Congress was the desire of early Congressmen for enlightening and educating the British public on Indian issues. [The Congress also wanted to place the Indian view of Indian affairs before the British people.⁷ The British Committee was, therefore, called upon to impress on the English people the need for redressing grievances and solving Indian problems. In order to achieve this object, the Committee adopted persuasive methods and constitutional means of propaganda which it regularly carried on through various ways, namely, public speeches, *India* journal, Indian Parliamentary Committee and personal contacts. Sir William was entrusted by the Indian National Congress with the important task of carrying on British propaganda in favour of Indian nationalist movement. Indeed he was the spokesman of the Congress in the British Parliament for seven years.⁸ The work of the British Congress Committee was entirely in his charge. As Chairman of this Committee he threw himself heart and soul to advocate the Indian cause in England. Soon after the establishment of the British Congress Committee, a journal known as *India* was started.⁹ This paper was the media through which the British public opinion was mobilised in favour of Indian demands. It was distributed free of charge to political associations and to the members of Parliament for their support. The paper became very popular within a short time, and it attracted the attention of the British officials. In connection with the Congress propaganda in England, and in order to further disarm the critics of the Congress, the fifth Congress session held in 1889 at Bombay elected Wedderburn its President.¹⁰

7. Gokhale Papers, File No. 579 Pt. IV: Douglas Hall to Gokhale October 1, 1912.

8. Singh, Hira Lal, *Problems and Policies of the British in India* (1885-1898), Bombay 1963, p. 222.

9. First it appeared as monthly, but on Jan. 7, 1898 it became a weekly paper and continued to be as such upto the end of 1920. It was edited by eminent and influential persons having intimate knowledge of India and her problems. Its first paid Editor was William Digby.

10. Argov, Daniel, *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement* (1883-1920), Bombay, 1967, p. 42.

Referring to the prospects of the Congress in England he affirmed that the success of the Congress depended solely upon the degree to which the British public would be induced to exert their influence on Indian affairs.¹¹

From time to time the Congress deputed able, trustworthy and prominent personalities to place India's case before the British people and convince them of their demands. Among those included Surendranath Banerjea, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pherozshah Mehta, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhupendranath Basu and many others. These delegates delivered a series of lectures, met the British Press, and held interviews with prominent English statesmen and other political leaders. They also addressed several social gatherings. Although these engagements were organised by the British Congress Committee, yet Wedderburn was the moving spirit, and played a vital role in making these a success. He introduced them to the British public, and even participated actively in the deliberations. For instance he spoke at Forster's Hall, Clerkenwell Road, London in April, 1890. He advocated India's case: "I plead for my voiceless countrymen.....for liberty and justice, and if these words have any importance, any weight, any significance among Christian people, I am sure, I shall not have pleaded in vain....."¹² At all such gatherings subjects like Indianisation of Civil services, reforms of the Indian Councils, economic condition of India and other relevant matters relating to India's prosperity were discussed.

In 1892 Sir William Wedderburn and Dadabhai Naoroji were elected to the House of Commons representing Bamffshire and Central Finsbury constituencies respectively. Thus they joined our British supporters in Parliament like John Bright, W. S. Caine, Samuel Smith, Sir C. E. Schwann and Herbert Paul. It added strength to the Indian agitation in British Parliament. Inspired by the results arising from the efforts of British liberals in furthering India's cause in the Parliament, William Wedderburn arranged a dinner party for a few leading independent members of Parliament. On this occasion he opened a discussion in which Indian

11. Vide, *Report of the Indian National Congress* (Bombay, 1889), p. 8.

12. Vide, *India*, April 25, 1890, p. 89.L

affairs were the main plank. It led to moving a resolution for the revival of a Committee for the purpose 'of promoting combined and well-directed action among those interested in Indian affairs.' The result of this discussion was the formation of an Indian Parliamentary Committee to look after the Indian interests in the Parliament. It came into existence on July 27, 1893 and it included several British liberals and radicals.¹³ William Wedderburn became its chairman. Due to his continued and persistent efforts the strength of this Committee rose to 152 members in 1894.¹⁴ As an active member of this Committee he justified the Congress organization which was giving the best expression to the Indian public opinion, and demanded the immediate action of the British Government in regard to India's prosperity. Appealing to the House he remarked: "If we could find out a way of making the whole India prosperous and contented, we had the clue to making the whole India prosperous and contented."¹⁵

He used every opportunity in bringing to the notice of the Parliament the evils of British administration, and advocated the Congress demands for reforms. He also spoke about the poor economic condition of Indian people due to the outbreak of severe famines at the close of the 19th century, and heavy taxes imposed on them.¹⁶ As a result of keen interest in the economic problems and their solution, the Indian Parliamentary Committee wanted an inquiry into the Civil and Military administration involving distinctive principles. Dadabhai persisted in the demand and asked to appoint a Royal Commission for the matter.¹⁷ William Wedderburn went on justifying the demand which was the 'most urgent' and much-needed. He affirmed: "We ask simply for an inde-

13. Notably among those were W. S. Caine, J. Ellis, John Bright, W. A. Hunter, Sir Illingworth, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Mc Laren, Joseph Pease, T. H. Roberts, C. E. Schwann, Samuel Smith, Herbert Paul, E. Wasan and Dadabhai Naoroji.

14. But in 1895 the number reduced to 85 as a large number of members suffered defeat at the general elections. In 1896 some new members joined it, and its total strength rose to 125.

15. *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Commons) September 21, 1893, 1810.

16. *Ibid.*, 20-9-1893, 1770-71

17. *Ibid.*

pendent inquiry in order to learn the true state, and in order to do justice."¹⁸

On 6th of July 1894 he addressed a letter to Sir H. H. Fowler—the then Secretary of State for India—which accompanied a note on Mr. Westland's Budget for 1894-95. This led to a debate in Parliament for the conduct of an independent inquiry.¹⁹ Along with his colleagues Dadabhai, Herbert Paul and Samuel Smith, he participated in the debate actively and urged for an inquiry in order to have a proper and effective control over the English officials in India. He even warned of the forthcoming danger arising from 'neglecting to hear the grievances of the people'.²⁰ On this significant issue he was successful in obtaining vigorous support of English friends. The result of the demand for the Parliamentary inquiry was significant and a brilliant discussion followed. In spite of differences of opinion and conflicts, the debate was carried on in good spirits. The participating members like Smith, Paul, Coble, Chesney, Reay, Temple, Fowler, Dadabhai and Wedderburn spoke convincingly. Finally, a Commission was appointed by Royal Warrant dated May 24, 1895 'to inquire into the administration and management of the Military and Civil Expenditure in India, and the apportionment of the cost of administration between the British and Indian Governments.'²¹

Sir Wedderburn had the privilege to sit on the Commission as one of the members. In that capacity too his performance was excellent when he placed before the Commission the Indian view on Indian questions.²² The other members of the Commission were W. S. Cairne and Dadabhai Naoroji. As the Commission was not scheduled to visit India, public bodies of the country (India) were invited to send their representatives to England in order to place their views before the Commission.²³ William Wedderburn,

18. *Ibid*, 21-9-1893, 1803.

19. *Vide*, *India*, August, 1894, pp. 236-37.

20. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 15-8-1894, 128-33.

21. *Parliamentary Papers* (House of Commons), 151, 1897, C 8252: Expenditure Commission Vol. I First Report of the Royal Commission with Minutes.

22. Patwardhan, R. P. & Ambekar, D.V., *The Speeches And Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, (Bombay 1962), p. 522.

23. S. N. Banerjee, D. E. Wacha, G. K. Gokhale G. S. Aiyer and K. N. Bahadurji were the Indian witnesses,

apart from their engagements in the Commission, took the Indian witnesses to the political world of England. He utilised their presence in England to the maximum, and organised a political propaganda on behalf of the Congress. These Indian delegates gave interviews to the representatives of the London Press on Indian affairs and addressed a number of public meetings in different parts of the Country. Gokhale left a great impression on the English people. The time of the year was not favourable as India was facing a disastrous famine affecting millions of Indian people and a large area of British India. The Government did not fully realise the nature and magnitude of the calamity arising from the famine, nor did it perform its duty properly in doing anything for the relief. Wedderburn, in collaboration with Dadabhai, and other members of the British Congress Committee founded the Lord Mayor's Fund for famine relief.

No less important than immediate relief was the problem of focussing the attention of Parliament on the basic economic issues of India, of breaking through the spell of official optimism to underline the terrible poverty, which made it difficult, rather impossible for the poverty-stricken peasantry to withstand the possible effect of a single failure of harvest.²⁴ The expenditure on relief work too was to come from Indian people which meant further increase in taxation. Wedderburn raised his voice aloud in the Parliament, and explained the nature and effect to the economic policy. He asked the members of Parliament to take notice of the sufferings of the Indian masses, and to take steps to remedy the sufferings and to restore peace and prosperity. He said: "The fact is that the people of India have during the past year suffered from almost every possible calamity—famine, plague, war and earthquakes and those sufferings have been aggravated by the very measures taken for their relief."²⁵ Not only this, he also drew the attention of the then Secretary of State for India, George Hamilton, to the serious question which faced Indian administration, and insisted on establishing more harmonious relations between the authorities and the Indian public.²⁶

24. *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Commons) 26-1-1897, 518.

25. *Ibid.*, 17-2-1898, 990.

26. Wedderburn to Hamilton Oct. 19, 1900: Hamilton Collection Microfilm Reel 2, Vol. I/II.

Between 1885-1900 the British agency of the Congress concentrated its activities more on economic issues. However, William Wedderburn as a Parliamentarian and as the chief spokes-man of the Indian National Congress spoke on every subject relating to India and her people, and cautioned the British Government against neglecting the welfare of Indian masses for imperial interests. He always made loud protests to the British authorities against the injustice done to India and pleaded for the political advancement of India. As an advocate of the Congress, he placed the Congress' views and demands before the British nation, and endeavoured to change the political climate of England in India's favour.

The Deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai

BY

PARDAMAN SINGH

The deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, the well known and popular leader of the Indian National Congress, in 1907 was an event of great significance. The aim of this brief paper is to analyse the circumstances which led to his deportation.¹

There was "unrest" in Punjab during 1906-07; "new air" (naya hawa) was blowing in men's minds. The national movement had secured considerable strength and appeal in Punjab. The Indian National Congress had held its session at Lahore twice within a decade (1893 and 1900). The teachings of Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, had received wide popularity throughout the province. They fostered pride in the country and its past, and were responsible for awakening. Later, the partition agitation and the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal also influenced Punjab. But the chief factor in the growing unrest was agrarian grievances. Enhanced land revenue² and water-rates contributed to the prevailing discontent. The passing of the Colonisation of Government Lands Bill added fuel to the fire. The Bill aimed at stopping further fragmentation of land holdings in the Chenab Colony—mostly inhabited by ex-soldiers—by introducing the law of primogeniture. There was great resentment against the measure; people regarded it as unjustified interference in their traditional rights relating to the division of property. A large number of protest meetings was held throughout the Punjab. Some of the meetings were addressed by Lala Lajpat Rai and S. Ajit Singh. It was strongly opposed in

1. Based on a study of the private papers of Minto, the Governor-General, and Morley, the Secretary of State for India.

2. The districts in which new land revenue assessment was sanctioned since the beginning of 1904 were: Attock, increase 28 per cent; Jhang, increase 48 per cent; Rawalpindi, increase 25 per cent; the Hafizabad Tehsil in the Gujranwala district, increase 71 per cent—Telegram, 13 May 1907, Viceroy to Secretary of State *Minto Papers*.

the Punjab legislative council and was rushed through its last stages.

The discontent it caused was, in the opinion of Minto, the Governor General, "genuine and justifiable",³ and he was inclined to veto the Bill. But Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, was strongly opposed to disallowing the Bill on the ground that it would be a surrender to agitation and derogatory to the prestige of the Punjab Government.⁴ Minto, however, ignored the protest of the Punjab Government. Refusing his assent to the Bill, he characterised it as "a very faulty piece of legislation,—legislation which would be unadvisable at any time, but which at the present moment, if it becomes law, would add fuel to the justifiable discontent which has already been caused—whilst the appearance of surrender to agitation, should any portion of the public entertain such reasoning, would in my opinion be far less dangerous than to insist on enforcing the unfortunate legislation proposed upon a warlike and loyal section of the Indian community."⁵

Imposition of illegal fines in the canal colonies was still another cause of discontent. "I am told on excellent authority", Minto informed Morley, "that the amount collected in fines during the last four years was 11 lakhs, and that in all probability reckoning in addition to the fines, bribes paid by the colonists to subordinate officials, the whole amount would equal about a crore and a half. It is perfectly monstrous. It really makes my blood boil. No wonder there was discontent, and yet in all probability, I believe, these poor people would have continued to be mulcted if the agitators had not seen their opportunity of publishing their grievances to the world. It is no excuse whatever for the Punjab Government to say that they were ignorant of what was going on. They must at any rate have known that 11 lakhs of fines were contributed to their revenues."⁶

3. Telegram, 25 May 1907, Viceroy to Secretary of State, *Ibid.*

4. Letter, 8 May 1907, Minto to Morley, *Ibid.*

5. Viceroy's order on the file deciding to withhold assent form Colonisation Bill, enclosure to letter, 27 May 1907, Dunlop Smith to MacLagan, Chief Secretary, Punjab, *Ibid.*

6. Letter, 7 August 1907, Minto to Morley, *Ibid.*

Then, there was plague. The first plague case in the Punjab was detected in 1897 and soon it spread taking about two million lives by 1910.⁷ The large-scale mortality was responsible for creating bitterness in the minds of the people and the comparative immunity of the Europeans led to rumours that the British were spreading the disease. This gave a fillip to racial antagonism.

A number of press prosecutions also excited much popular feeling in the province. In the issue of 11 April 1906, the *Punjabee* of Lahore published two editorial paragraphs entitled "How Misunderstandings Occur" and "A Deliberate Murder". The first article referred to the death of two *begaris*⁸ from exhaustion and cold when employed to carry the luggage of the Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi who was out on tour. The second article mentioned the death of a Muslim orderly who was shot dead by a European officer in "a district not very far from Lahore" for refusing to carry home the carcase of a boar.⁹ Prosecution was launched against the *Punjabee* and the result was that the proprietor L. Jaswant Rai was sentenced under section 153-A, Indian Penal Code, to two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1,000, and the editor K. K. Athavale was sentenced under the same section to six months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200.¹⁰ The Sessions Court regarded the sentence on the proprietor as "too severe" and consequently reduced it to six months' rigorous imprisonment.¹¹ Later on it was altered to simple imprisonment by the Chief Court.¹² The editor and proprietor of the weekly *India*, Gujranwala, were also prosecuted under sections 124-A and 131 of the Indian Penal Code for publishing an appeal to the "Men of the British Indian Army" by "the natives

7. The figure is given in Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, (1966), p. 561.

8. From the world *begar* — pressing of men and beasts in service of official without any payment.

9. *Vide*, *Public A Progs.*, August 1906, no. 68.

10. Letter, 4 March 1907, Punjab to India, *Public A Progs.*: May 1907, No. 127.

11. Letter, 8 April 1907, Punjab to India, *Public A Progs.*: May 1907, No. 132.

12. Letter, 7 May 1907, Punjab to India, *Public A Progs.*: May 1907, No. 134.

of India and Afghanistan who have emigrated to America". It urged them to rise against the British Government.¹³

The Punjab in 1906-1907 was in ferment on account of a number of causes. Unjust administrative and legislative measures of the government, the Colonization Bill, increase in irrigation rates and land revenue, the imposition of illegal fines and the spread of the plague all contributed to discontent among the people of the province. The unrest in the Punjab, for the most part, was not the result of outside influence nor was it engineered by the extremist agitators.

This popular discontent led to riots in Rawalpindi in May, 1907. On 21 April a public meeting was held at Rawalpindi to protest against the Colonisation Bill. It was attended by S. Ajit Singh, "notorious anti-British agitator", where he delivered a seditious speech. The Deputy Commissioner sent notice to three pleaders, Lala Hans Raj, Lala Amolak Ram, Lala Gurdas Ram, the organisers of the meeting, and summoned them to his court for an enquiry. A large crowd gathered at court to express sympathy with the pleaders, and when informed that the proposed enquiry would not be held, they committed acts of violence.¹⁴ On 27 May sixty-eight persons, including six lawyers, were brought to trial before a Special Magistrate on charges of rioting, criminal trespass and arson and abetment of the above. The trial dragged on for many months. In November 1907 six persons were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The six lawyers charged with "aiding and abetting" were acquitted.

This agitation in the Punjab unnerved the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Denzil Ibbetson. He came to believe that the political situation in the province was "exceedingly serious, and exceedingly dangerous, and as urgently demanding a remedy." He informed the Viceroy that a definite anti-British propaganda had started in the villages; corruption of the yeomanry, Sikhs and the military pensioners, was systematically planned; the movement of withholding the payment of Government revenue, water-rates and other dues was beginning to take a prominent position and every-

13. Vide, *Political A Progs.*, July 1907, No. 3-5.

14. Private telegrams, 3 May 1907, 5 May 1907, Viceroy to Secretary of State, *Minto Papers*...

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where 'people are sensible of a change of a "new air" (naya hawa).'¹⁵ In view of the "persistent", "malignant" and "widespread" agitation the Lieutenant-Governor asked the Government of India for a power "to prevent, by executive action, the stream of seditious poison being poured into the minds of our people, either by printed matter or orally",¹⁶ and to deport (under section 2 of Regulation III of 1818) Ajit Singh, "the most active and the most virulent of those who have spoken against the British Government" and Lala Lajpat Rai, "a revolutionary, a political enthusiast, probably honest" who was everywhere recognised as "the moving spirit" of the whole agitation.¹⁷ These "executive powers of a somewhat arbitrary character" were necessary if the peace of the province was to be preserved, declared Sir Denzil Ibbetson.¹⁸

Ibbetson entirely misjudged the character and volume of the unrest prevalent in the Punjab. Unable to gauge the real feelings of the people and analyse the causes of the mounting discontent the Local Government came under the influence of panic, more so, as the year 1907 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the sepoys' uprising and there was nervous apprehension among the European community that there would be a fresh outbreak of the mutiny in the province. In this tense atmosphere the Government wanted to make an impressive show of force and they struck, as Gokhale said, Lala Lajpat Rai, "simply because he was the most prominent political worker in the Province."¹⁹

Lord Minto was taken aback by this official information about the existence of so much sedition in Punjab. His own reaction was, "we are just now at a moment when if we act quickly, we may save a lot of trouble", and he favoured the issue of warrants at once. He did not consult Morley. "It is a matter of a few days. If we temporise and ask advice from home, things may drift from

15. Sir Denzil Ibbetson's minute, 30 April 1907, enclosure to letter, 3 May 1907, Punjab to India, *Political A Progs.*, August 1907, No. 148.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Letter, 3 May 1907, Punjab to India, *Political A Progs.*, August 1907, No. 149.

18. Letter, 3 May 1907, Ibbetson to Minto, *Minto Papers*.

19. Gokhale's letter to the Editor, *Times of India*, 21 May 1907, *Gokhale Papers*.

bad to worse."²⁰ The question was discussed in the Executive Council. The Home Member, H. Adamson, and the Legal Member, Erle Richards, were in favour of employing only the legal machinery "now in existence and against utilising an old Act."²¹ The orders of warrant were issued and Lajpat Rai was arrested and deported on 9 May and Ajit Singh on 3 June 1907. They were sent to Mandalay, Burma.²²

The arrest of Lajpat Rai caused countrywide sympathy for him. G. K. Gokhale felt that the Government had done a "grievous wrong" to him in depriving him of his liberty without a trial and deporting him out of the country. About his activities he said: "Again and again he (Lajpat Rai) and I have discussed our aims, hopes, our methods of work and there never has been any substantial difference of opinion between us. His language was at times a trifle strong—this must necessarily be a matter of temperament—but his aims and methods have always been strictly constitutional and I refuse to believe—unless clear evidence to the contrary is forthcoming—that he could ever have done anything that could in any way constitute a justification for the action of the Government."²³ Later on even the Viceroy doubted "whether there was sufficient cause for Lajpat's arrest." He never admired the action of the Punjab Government and believed that they came under the influence of "scare". But for political reasons Minto supported the action of Ibbetson, and in his opinion the arrest of Lajpat Rai, "whether technically justifiable or not, undoubtedly had the effect of restoring confidence in the strength of British administration, and very possibly saved us from great dangers."²⁴

20. Letter, 5 May 1907, Minto to Kitchener, *Minto Papers*.

21. *Ibid.* . . .

22. After the deportation of these two leaders Morley was "wounded" by such remarks! "shelving the principles of a life time", "violently unsaying all that he has been saying for thirty or forty years". Letter, 28 June, 1907, Morley to Minto, *ibid.*

23. Gokhale's letter to the editor, *Times of India*, 21 May 1907, *Gokhale Papers*.

24. Letter, 6 May 1908, Minto to Morley, *Minto Papers*.

Genesis and Growth of Indian National Congress

BY

P. N. CHOPRA

The origin of the Indian National Congress has baffled many a historian including Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, official historian of the Congress, who thought it to be shrouded in mystery. Conflicting opinions have been expressed by different writers about its inception. Some regard it to be the creation of an individual, others seek to give it an "impersonal origin, a birth in circumstance, a spontaneous character" rather than to admit that it was the creation of an individual. "Its roots", it is said, "are to be discovered in the separate political associations in various parts of India. It was watered, we are told, by the controversies over the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act, the reduction of age limit for entrance into Indian Civil Service and the Ilbert Bill." There are a few others who regard it to be a "Child of Russophobia". But many incline to the view that the Congress was "but the first rich harvest of what had been sown long before by wise and beneficent statesmen in the shape of schools and colleges."¹

A thorough study of the contemporary literature and private papers, however, enables us to arrive at certain reasonably definite conclusions. None of the above-mentioned factors can take the sole credit for the origin of the Congress. It was rather a combination of all these and many more factors, as we shall trace in the following pages, that paved the way for the birth of this premier political organisation which was destined to play a leading role in the history of India's Freedom struggle.

Surendranath Banerjea (1849-1925) declared the Indian National Congress "to be the outcome of those civilizing influences, which Macaulay and his co-adjutors were instrumental in implanting in the Government of the country".

1. *Report of the Indian National Congress, 'Presidential Address,' 1895.*

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Wedderburn² (1838-1918), biographer and close friend of Hume, who was lavish in his praise of the British, regarded it to be "the direct result of the noblest efforts of the British statesmanship; the national and healthy fruit of higher education and free institutions" granted to the people of India. In fact, "the Congress constitutes a visible embodiment of the national awakening", that came over India as a result of the impact of western civilization on Indian thought. According to them, it is the ideals of Milton, Locke, Wilberforce, Mill, Bright and Gladstone that kindled the Indian mind. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta also spoke in the same strain at the 4th session of the Indian National Congress. "We launched the Congress", he said, "on its enterprise—not of supplanting the existing rulers of the country but of supplementing the endeavours of the best and the most sagacious among them by proposing modifications and developments based on our peculiar and native knowledge and information suggested gratefully by that enlightenment and education, which is one of the most precious gifts bestowed upon us by British rule"³.... But we must remember that there were also other forces at work that accelerated this process of evolution. As a result of the political consciousness aroused in the educated community due to these influences, many political associations of the natives sprang up in different parts of the country before the birth of All India Congress. Indian Association⁴ in Bengal (founded on July 2, 1876), Bombay Presidency Association in Bombay,⁵ (January, 31st, 1885), Mahajan Sabha in Madras,⁶ (May 16, 1884) and Sarvajanic Sabha in Poona,⁷ (founded in 1870) were the most prominent of them. Besides the branches of the Indian Association set up throughout northern India even upto Lahore⁸ after that historic tour of Surendranath Banerjea (1877)

2. Wedderburn, *Speeches and writings*, 1918, p. 2.

3. *Report of the Indian National Congress*, 'Presidential Address', 1892.

4. For its activities refer to:

Bagal, J. C.: *History of the Indian Association*, (1876-1951), Calcutta, 1953.

5. Tyabji B. Hussain: *Baduruddin*, 1952; Masani R. P.: *Dadabhai Naoroji*, 1939; Modi, H. P.: *Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, 2 vol., 1921.

6. *Proc. Home—Public*, April, 1888, Nos. 173-75.

7. Zacharias, H.C.E., *Renascent India*, (1933) p. 46.

8. Bagal, *op. cit.*, p. 58, Surendranath writes: "There is indeed lift in Northern India. There is a hidden but deep under-current of political feeling in the Punjab and the North Western Provinces They are not insensible

which has perhaps been rightly acclaimed as "the first successful attempt of its kind at uniting India on political basis", there seemed to have local associations in existence on the eve of the birth of the Congress in all the big cities of India. Agra Association at Agra, Rifah-Am Association at Lucknow, Hindu Samaj at Allahabad, Vaidik Samaj at Farukhabad,⁹ Arya Samaj, Singh Sabha, Social Club and Anjuman-i-Islamiya at Ferozepore,¹⁰ Anjuman-i-Faiz-i-Am at Gujranwala, Hindu Sabha and Singh Sabha at Ambala, Meerut Association,^{10a} Meerut, Bhartri Sabha at Dera Ismal Khan,¹¹ Prajahit Vardhak Sabha At Surat, Sind Sabha at Sukhar, Barisal People's Association at Bachergunge, Dacca People's Association at Dacca, Rajshaya Association at Rajshaiye, Indian Union at Calcutta, Triplicane Literary Society at Madras, Shillong Association at Shillong, Upper Association at Dibrugarh, and Habiganj People's Association at Silchar, deserve special mention.¹² Some of these associations were quite active. It was under their directive that countrywide demonstrations were held to bid farewell to Lord Ripon. It was due to the influence of these bodies that the Surat Municipality declined to vote an address of welcome or to grant funds for the reception of Lord Dufferin, 2 years later in 1886. Similar bodies in Eastern Bengal tried to carry out a similar device at Dacca but their attempts failed due to the influence of certain Muhammadans.^{12a} These

to the interests of their fatherland. They are not deaf to the calls of patriotism and above all they have loving and sympathetic hearts and are ever willing to extend the hand of brotherhood to their countrymen of other presidencies". *op. cit.*, p. 26.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

10. For a detailed list of these associations refer to *Proc. Home—Public*, April, 1888. Nos. 172-75.

10a. Founded in 1881 for "helping in the formation of a healthy public opinion in all questions of importance, to promote by every legitimate means, the political, social, intellectual and material advancement of the people". *Meerut District Gazetteer*, p. 439).

11. For a detailed list of these associations as appended to the list of delegates who attended the Second Indian National Congress held at Calcutta, December 1886 refer to *Proc. Home, Public* April, 1888, Nos. 173-75.

12. Andrews C.F. and Mukerjee G.; *Rise and Growth of Congress in India*, London, 1938, p. 88.

12a. Rattray, Austin: "The Indian National Congress." *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*. Jan.-April, 1889.

associations no doubt, did a lot to prepare the ground for an all India organisation as we have mentioned already, but there were also other forces at work which accelerated this process of evolution.

Lord Lytton's disastrous rule nearly brought ruin to India.¹³ His imposition of the infamous Vernacular Press Act and Arms Act were bitterly resented by Indians.¹⁴ He provoked a war with Afghanistan and relentlessly pursued it with the money extorted from the poor ryots who became so desperate that very serious agrarian anti-tax riots swept, for instance, the Deccan.¹⁵ Armed bands were moving about the country and as Sir William Wedderburn told W. S. Blunt, "the state of things at the end of Lord Lytton's reign (1876-1880) was bordering upon revolution."¹⁶ Lord Ripon's arrival, however, had kindled a new hope and gave a great stimulus to the revival of public activities.¹⁷ "Political Life had sprung up in the atmosphere created by Lord Ripon's policy" says Lajpat Rai¹⁸ but his defeat on the Ilbert Bill did more. "Not only did it leave ranking sense of humiliation on the minds of educated Indians, but also set on foot a national movement of organised co-operation among the Indian people which as the Indian National Congress had a great influence upon the political emancipation of India."

Lord Ripon's just and generous attempt aiming at racial justice practically failed in face of the organised Anglo-Indian Opposition,¹⁹ but it let loose a national avalanche particularly in Bengal referring to which Blunt wrote in his private diary that a catastrophe was in the air.²⁰ The cry of revolution had caught the imagination of the responsible leaders like Surendranath Banerji

13. Zacharias, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Andrews & Mukerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 898-90.

16. Blunt, W.S., *India under Ripon* (1885), p. 216.

17. Chintamani. C.Y., *Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, London, 1940, p. 13; Mazumdar, A.C., *Indian National Evolution*, Madras, 1917, p. 34, Zacharias. *op. cit.*

18. Lajpat Rai *Young India*, (1917) p. 130....

19. Andrews C.F., & Mukherjee, G., *Op. cit.*, p. 89, Mazumdar, A.C. *op. cit.* p. 39.

20. Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

(1848-1925) who "let slip the gros mot of revolution" in regard to it.²¹ Blunt's conversation during the talks with Ananda Mohan Bose, Secretary of the National Conference, also revealed that "the danger of a revolution was very great as the people were loosing confidence in Lord Ripon having it in the British Government." Malabari, the Bombay leader, was no less disappointed and declared that they will never get anything new without something like a revolution which is wholly my own opinion."²²

The imprisonment of Surendranath Banerjea on the charge of contempt of Court had aroused a wide-spread sympathy throughout the country.²³ In fact he had become the idol of the youth of the country.²⁴ The leaders of the Indian Association were shrewd enough not to allow the universal awakening that followed the Ilbert Bill Agitation²⁵ and Surendranath's imprisonment to slip by.²⁶ Surendranath's attempts at the suggestions of certain politically-conscious Indians like Tarapade Benerji, a Bengali lawyer of Krishnanagore²⁷ near Calcutta, to "raise a national fund to secure the political advancement of the country by means of constitutional agitation in England and in India" met with considerable success.

Taking advantage of the International Exhibition scheduled to be held in Calcutta in December, 1883, the leaders of the Indian Association²⁸ called the first National Conference in Calcutta on

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid*, p. 216.

23. Surendranath Banerjea was convicted for 2 months. May 5, 1883 to July 4, 1883. Bagal, J.C., *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60 and 60-61.

24. *Ibid.* For details of the case refer to *Ibid*, pp. 59-61...

25. For its effects refer to A. C. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

26. Bagal, J. C. *op. cit.*, pp 63-64.

27. He wrote a letter to the Indian Mirror to which we will have the occasion to refer in detail later on. A paragraph of it runs as follows: "The imprisonment of Surendranath Banerjea suggested to me as it must have suggested to many of my countrymen who care to think of India's welfare that the opportunity had come to do something towards the creation of a national fund and the formation of a national Assembly". Andrews & Mukherji *op. cit.*, pp. 124-25.

28. Bagal J. C., *op. cit.*, 61-62.

December 28 to December 30, 1883.²⁹ This National Conference, perhaps the first of its kind in India may rightly be regarded as the predecessor of the Indian National Congress to be started two years later in 1885.³⁰ C. F. Andrews and Girija Mookerjee pay a well deserved tribute to the sponsors of the Indian Association when they write: "With the full establishment of the Congress, the Indian Association gradually lost its political importance. Yet it has to be remembered that the idea of holding an All India Conference with representatives from every province was its own invention."³¹ This Conference seemed to have been quite successful and was regarded by the Secretary, Ananda Mohan Bose as the first stage towards a Parliament.³² Wilfred Scawen Blunt who was a visitor at the Conference tells us that the Conference was "very provincial in its interests as quite three parts (three quarters of the hundred) of the delegates are Bengalis."³³ Muhammadans and landed aristocracy were conspicuous by their absence.³⁴

Nine months before this Conference had met, a noble-minded Scotsman Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912) reputed to be the father of the Indian National Congress had addressed an open letter dated March 1, 1883 to the graduates of the Calcutta University as largely representing the educated Community in India. As the worthy son of the founder of the Radical Party in England,³⁵ Hume was essentially democratic in his instincts.³⁶ His kind and considerate treatment of the people of Etawah during the dark days of the Mutiny when he was a Magistrate there had endeared him throughout Panjab.³⁷ He was Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department in the year 1870 and then in the

29. British Indian Association did not participate. Bagal J.C. *op. cit.*, 64. Delhi Darbar held in 1877 was perhaps the first occasion which suggested to the Indian leaders the idea of holding a national Congress of the representatives of the people.

30. Bagal, *op. cit.*, pp 80-81

31. *Ibid.*, p. 64. Andrews & Mukherji, *op. cit.*, 115-16.

32. Bagal *op. cit.*, 81.

33. Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

34. Bagal, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

35. Joseph Hume. For his life sketch refer to Wedderburn: *Allan Octavian Hume*, pp. 3-5.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

37. For his reforms refer to *Ibid.*, pp. 15-31.

newly created Department of Revenue, and Agriculture and Commerce from 1871 to 1879.³⁸ His removal from the latter post in 1879 was mainly due to his liberal views.³⁹ Referring to the "measure by which Mr. Hume was summarily superseded and degraded" the Englishman wrote, "the plea advanced in justification of this arbitrary act was that Mr. Hume habitually in his minutes on measures coming up for discussion in his department expressed his views with great freedom without regard to what might be the wishes or intention of his superiors."⁴⁰

Deeply devoted as he was, to the welfare of the people of India, Hume watched with deep concern the tremendous unrest during the closing years of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty (1876-1880) to which we have referred earlier. His biographer (Wedderburn) writes: And about the years 1878 and 1879 economic in combination with political troubles were actively at work throughout India, the physical suffering of the many acted on by intellectual discontent of the few was rapidly bringing popular unrest to the danger point.⁴¹ Wedderburn (1838-1918) describes in detail Hume's special sources of information about the grave danger "to the Government and to the future welfare of India if nothing was done immediately to counteract it". Fifteen months before the departure of Lord Lytton, Wedderburn tells us, Hume came across seven large volumes containing a vast number of communications from over 30,000 reporters from different parts of India. "The jungle is all dry, they said, fire does spread wonderfully in such when the right wind blows and it is blowing now and hard". Most of these entries, reported conversations between men of the lowest classes "all going to show that these poormen were pervaded with a sense of the hopelessness of the existing state of affairs, that they were convinced that they would starve and starve and die and that they wanted to do something, they were going to do something and stand by each other and that something meant violence,"⁴² for

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, p. 77...

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

innumerable entries referred to the secretion of old swords, spears, and matchlocks which would be ready when required."⁴³

That Hume's fears were not unfounded is evident from the reports which were published in some of the native newspapers and were quoted in *London Times* dated 21st September, 1884. A gist of these reports as quoted by Dinshah Ardeshir Taleyarkhan in his *Selections from my recent notes on the Indian Empire* was "Foreigners have taken possession of India and are sucking her dry. The people of India look on in a helpless manner. Their best interests" are sacrificed for the benefit of the English. Over and above this, "the innocent natives are insulted and killed. At every step the people send up a cry for succour, when the English whip or the English kick falls upon them. The demons are engaged, heart and soul, in violating the "chastity and taking the lives of Indian females. What a heart-rending scene! It is a matter of regret that the people of India do not gird up their loins to get rid of the oppression of whitemen."

Hume was convinced of the imminence of a terrible outbreak as he stated a few year later "I could not then and do not now entertain a shadow of doubt that we were truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution."⁴⁴ Hume was approached by the Indian leaders of these religious sects from whom the reports referred earlier had emanated to do something to avert the calamity.⁴⁵ His attitude was one of co-operation and he was determined to provide a safety valve for the escape of these "great and growing forces." After some anxious thoughts he reached the conclusion that "the solution of this fateful problem lay in associating the natives in the management of their own affairs." It must be added, however, that at those early stages it was certainly not India's freedom or home rule to which Hume could possibly have looked forward to. His idea was to find ways and means of directing the popular impulse of which he had such alarming evidence into an innocuous channel. However, Hume postponed definite action; it appears, mainly due to the arrival of Lord Ripon which had revived hopes among the people. Retiring from service in 1882, he refused the Lieutenant Gover-

43. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

nership of the Panjab⁴⁶ and dramatically addressed the letter dated March 1, 1883 to the graduates of the Calcutta University.⁴⁷

This soul-stirring letter bespeaks of the organising ability and deep knowledge of psychology of the shrewd Scotsman whose historic letter opens with these wise and kindly words: "Constituting as you do, a large body of the most highly educated Indians, you should in the natural order of things, constitute also the most important source of all mental, moral, social and political progress in India. Whether in the individual or the nation, all vital progress must spring from within and it is to you, her most cultured and enlightened minds, her most favoured sons, that your country must look for the initiative. In vain may aliens, like myself love India and her children, as well as the most loving of these, in vain may they for her and their good, give time and trouble, money and thought; in vain may they struggle and sacrifice; they may assist with advice and suggestions; they may place their experience, abilities and knowledge at the disposal of the workers but they lack the essential of nationality and the real work must ever be done by the people of the country themselves."⁴⁸ Hume then suggests the necessity of an organisation. "Scattered individuals, however, capable and however well-meaning, are powerless singly. What is needed is Union, organisation and to secure these an association is required armed and organised with unusual care, having for its object to promote the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India." He wanted only those educated people to come forward who have moral courage, self-control and active spirit of benevolence." And then he proposed that a commencement should be made with a body of fifty founders to be the mustard seed of future growth; if only fifty men, good and true, can be found to join as founders, the thing can be established and the future development will be comparatively easy." The details of the organisation were left for the members to decide. Hume, however, laid emphasis on its constitution being democratic, free from personal ambitions; the head should merely be the chief servant and his council assistant servants. And then Hume sounds

46. *Ibid*, p. 46.

47. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

48. Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

a warning that if fifty persons with "sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heart-felt patriotism to take initiative and if need be, devote the rest of their lives to the cause could not be available, then there is no hope for India." And the concluding portion of this memorable letter both stirs and stings, "and if even the leaders of thought are all either such poor creatures, or so selfishly wedded to personal concerns, that they dare not or will not strike a blow for their country's sake, then justly and rightly are they kept down and trampled on, for they deserve nothing better. Every nation secures precisely as good a government as it merits. If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the management of your own affairs, then we your friends are wrong, and our adversaries right; then are Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good fruitless and visionary; then, at present at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she now enjoys. Only, if this be so, let us hear no more factions, peevish complaints that you are kept in leading strings, and treated like children, for you will have proved yourselves such. Men know how to act. Let there be no more complaints of Englishmen being preferred to you in all important offices, for if you lack that public spirit, that highest form of altruistic devotion that leads men to subordinate private ease to the public weal; that true patriotism that has made Englishmen what they are. Then rightly are these preferred to you, and rightly and inevitably have they become your rulers. And rulers and taskmasters they must continue. Let the yoke gall your shoulders never so sorely, until you realize and stand prepared to act upon the eternal truth that, whether in the case of individuals or nations, self-sacrifice and unselfishness are the only unfailing guides to freedom and happiness."⁴⁹

There is no contemporary evidence available as to the circumstances which prompted Hume to issue the above circular letter in March, 1883. Obviously Hume was encouraged by the favourable

49. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

atmosphere then prevailing in the country due to Lord Ripon's conciliatory policy. In fact he had postponed his idea of starting an organisation (during Lord Lytton's time). "Until his retirement from the service," as Wedderburn tells us "he should be free to act and able to take advantage of the growing improvement in the popular feeling produced by Lord Ripon's benign presence."⁵⁰

Time was now ripe to make a beginning and Hume struck at the right moment. In fact Hume was not the only person in the field. That many politically-conscious Indians were also inclining towards the thought of an All India organisation as early as 1883 is evident from the letters of Tarapada Banerjee which appeared in the *Indian Mirror*.⁵¹ Tarapada had suggested on July 4, 1883, a meeting of delegates from all India at Calcutta. Later on, he elaborated his scheme to "appoint a managing Committee and a fund" with the object of having a permanent delegate in England to represent and agitate there for our grievances; to adopt suitable measures for imparting political education to our people; to encourage national trade and industry and to adopt means for the creation of good feeling between the different religious sects of India. Kristo Das Pal, a well-known public leader (He was nominated to the Council by Lord Ripon at the recommendation of the British India Association) had also expressed similar views. Hume himself in a speech at a public meeting at Allahabad on April 30, 1888, modestly disclaimed his own single authorship of the idea. "The Congress movement" he said "is only one outcome—though at the movement the most prominent and tangible—of the labours of a body of cultured men mostly born natives of India who, some years ago, banded themselves together to labour⁵² silently for the good of India. To say this does not in the least take away the great credit which is due to Hume for his dynamic personality and energy which obviously needed in order to make the venture a success. Gokhale was not wrong when he declared in 1913,⁵³ "No Indian could have started the Indian National Congress. Apart

50. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

51. Andrews & Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-25.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

53. De Mello, F.M. "*The Indian National Congress*, p-2.

from the fact that anyone putting his hand to such a gigantic task had need to have Mr. Hume's commanding personality, even if an Indian had possessed such a personality and had come forward to start such a movement embracing all India, the officials would not have allowed it to come into existence. If the founder of the Congress had not been a great Englishman, and a distinguished ex-official, such was the distrust of political agitation in those days that the authorities would have at once found some way or the other of suppressing the movement."

That this passionate appeal of Hume which "in its deep pathos and eloquence no less than in its burning zeal and warm sympathy reads like St. Paul's epistles to the Romans",⁵⁴ did not go in vain we learn from Annie Besant's reference to a meeting in December, 1884 at the house of Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao of seventeen "good and true men who out of their love and their hope conceived the idea of a political national movement for the saving of the motherland."⁵⁵ Most of them were delegates to the just ended annual convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar and others had been there as friends and admirers.⁵⁶ Prof. Sunder Raman who was one of the members of the first Congress Session refers to this meeting called by Raghunath Rao "to find ways and means of bringing together Indian politicians to inaugurate a political movement for the regeneration and reform of the methods of Government of this country calculated to promote a future Indian advance towards Swaraj." If we are to believe Mrs. Besant this meeting of the seventeen men "good and true" whose names she mentions in her book was the precursor of the Congress.⁵⁷ Strangely enough Mr. Hume's name is not there. Instead Surendranath Banerjea who denied any knowledge about the foundation of the Congress "until on the eve of its sitting"⁵⁸ has been included among those who were present at that meeting at Adyar. Majority of these persons it may be interesting to recall, were not present at the first session of the Congress. Moreover, neither Wedderburn in his biography of Hume nor Surendranath Banerjea in his auto-

54. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

55. Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 2.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

57. Andrews & Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

58. Annie Besant, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

biography or the official proceedings of the Congress refer to this meeting.⁵⁹ The only tangible explanation that can be offered in the circumstances is that this meeting though having no direct bearing on the foundation of the Congress indirectly stressed upon Hume the necessity of expediting his plans for the formation of an organisation lest the initiative might pass on to more ambitious hands. So Hume at once started the consultations and discussed his plan with "all the most eminent and earnest politicians of the Empire." Badruddin Tyabji's (1844-1906) biographer informs us that Hume "had of course met and discussed his plan with Badruddin and the other great leaders of Bombay⁶⁰ (obviously he refers to Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1913), Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915) and Telang. Mahadev Govinda Ranade (1842-1901) was another Indian leader who is given credit by his biographer to have played a leading role in the establishment of the Congress. Karve writes: "Ranade with the help of the progressive elements among official and non-official Englishmen laid the foundation of the premier political association of the land. He had to work, having been an official, mostly from behind the scenes."⁶¹

Bombay's share in the foundation of the Congress has not received due recognition. The foundation of a National Political Association in Bombay in February 1885 with the avowed object of watching the interests of the country as a whole has escaped the notice of the scholars. As explained by one of its founder-members, Badruddin Tyabji, it meant to be an all India political body. This is clear from his inaugural address: "It is, I think, with nations as with individuals that with the growth of political life, new aspirations arise and these aspirations require an organisation to give their due expression and the organisation in its turn watches, regulates, and develops the national aspirations." He desired it to be a truly national association founded upon a permanent basis. He even thought ahead of the founders of the Congress when he said "Let there be a financial non-official Parliament. No Parliament in the true sense of the term, will just now be allowed to

59. Bagal, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

60. Tyabji, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

61. Karve, D.G., *Ranade, the prophet of Liberated India*, pp. XXXIV-XXXV.

India. Instead of a ponderous association let there be a financial Parliament founded on self-imposed obligations. Take up the previous budgets, study them thoroughly, compare its facts and figures with the actual internal circumstances from which they may have been drawn, and let each member of that Parliament criticise it and throw out tangible suggestions to improve the revenues and regulate the expenditures. The proceedings of the people's representatives should be published far and wide and sent to the Government. Every large question should be thoroughly and openly discussed in the people's assembly or the non-official Parliament before a representation is made to the Government on the subject. As one of the first measures—discuss the eligibility of some high-posted judicial native officer of long standing in the service, or some native officer of great administrative experience to be recommended as an executive member in the Viceregal or a subordinate Government's Council. If this be not practicable just now, induce the Government to promise that certain classes of native officials will be eligible to executive seats in the Council on so many years' approved service (8th February, 1885). Dadabhai Naoroji, U. J. Telong, P. M. Mehta, Nowrasji Furdunji were its active leaders."^{61a}

It is surprising to note that Surendranath Banerjea, the recognised leader of Bengal who had played such an important role in the national awakening and political unification of the country does not figure among the founders of the Congress. He could not attend the first session of the Congress though an invitation was extended to him by the President W. C. Banerjee (1844-1906) as he writes: "I told him it was too late to suspend the Conference (National Conference, 1885) and that as I had a large share in its organisation it would not be possible for me to leave Calcutta and attend the Bombay Congress." The reasons for this are not far to seek. As a dismissed Government official, he was looked upon with suspicion by the British Government. That's why Surendranath, though working zealously for the Indian Association, kept himself deliberately in the background.⁶² His political

61a. Taleyar Khan: *Selections from my recent notes on the Indian Empire*, pp. 206-7, 211, 235.

62. Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 42.

agitations, and the enthusiasm they created particularly in Bengal embittered the Government and there were rumours as stated by the newspaper Kala Kankar, "that Lord Dufferin intends on his arrival to follow a coercive policy in Bengal"⁶³—the centre of political activities in those days. Lord Dufferin's attack on the dress of the deputation of the Indian Association led by Surendranath at the Government House is a further proof of Viceroy's displeasure.⁶⁴ Naturally the founders of the Congress who were men of moderate views thought it advisable not to arouse the hostility of the Government by aligning themselves with a leader or a party towards whom the Government was not well-disposed. That may also explain why in preference to Surendranath the recognised leader of Bengal, the presidentship of the first Congress session was offered to W. C. Bannerji who, to all intents and purposes, as recorded by P. C. Ray in his *Life and Times of C. R. Das*,⁶⁵ "lived the life of an Englishman and whose full name many Bengalis of his day hardly knew, had all his life ridiculed all sorts of political agitation, until he became a convert to the nationalist ideas of his day by the fact of having brushed aside by the Government for the crime of being native, when the appointment of the Standing Council of the High Court of Calcutta fell vacant."⁶⁶ The presumption of the founders of the Congress was correct. His association with the Congress would have certainly raised doubts about the aims and objectives of the organisation. Even in 1889, five years after the inception of the Congress, the British writer Austin Rattary strongly criticised him and called him a 'great Congress agitator'.⁶⁷ But the way in which the Indian Association led by Surendranath Banerjee, though first in the

63. Kala Kankar, April 289, 1886, Report on Native Newspapers of Punjab, N.W.P. and Oudh, 1886, p. 386.

64. Bagal, *op. cit.*, 83.

65. R. P. Modi in his biography of Pherozeshah Mehta (p. 184) assures us that "Bengal has produced no greater and more capable leader than W. C. Bannerjee."

66. Ray, P. C., *Life and Times of C. R. Das*, Madras, 1928 pp. 121-22.

67. Rattary Austin, "The Indian National Congress" *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, Jan-April, 1889.

field, gave way to the newly founded organisation in the interest of the nation, as stated earlier, speaks well of the patriotism of the great Bengali leader.

Another point which requires further elaboration is the part played by Lord Dufferin (1884-1888) in the foundation of the Congress. Wedderburn tells us that in initiating the National Movement, Hume took counsel from the Viceroy Lord Dufferin and whereas he was himself disposed to begin his reform propaganda on the social side, it was apparently due to Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organisation, as the matter first to be dealt with. Lord Dufferin seems to have told him that as head of the Government, he had found the greatest difficulty in ascertaining the real wishes of the people and that for the purpose of administration it would be a public benefit if there existed some responsible organisation through which the Government might be kept informed regarding the best Indian public opinion. He further observed that owing to the wide difference in caste, race, and religion, social reform in India required local treatment rather than the guidance of national organisation.⁶⁸ There is a further corroboration of this interesting episode from no less an authority than W. C. Bannerji, first President of Indian National Congress.⁶⁹ "If Allan Hume was the father of the Congress, the Marquis of Dufferin was the God-father", writes R. P. Masani in his biography of Dadabhai "for it was he who advised Hume not to" restrict its scope to agitation on the social side as was Hume's original idea but to widen its scope and definitely aim at the political education of the people.⁷⁰ Dufferin himself recorded a note on the subject. It said, "Under existing circumstance, the Government of India has no adequate medium through which it can explain its policy, correct a wrong information or controvert a false statement and though upto the present time, the consequences of the evils, I have not indicated, may not become very serious or widespread, they contain the germs of incalculable danger. Consequently it would prove as great an advantage to the

68. Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, 59-60; A. C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

69. Natesan, G. A., *Indian Politics*

70. Lyall, A. *The Life of Marquis of Dufferin & Ava*, p. 155.

Administration as it would frequently be a satisfaction to the members of the Council and the public at large, if reasonable opportunities were afforded of communicating to those interested in the existing facts in regard to any questionable matter."⁷¹ Lala Lajpat Rai also thought that the Congress was an English product—a product of Lord Dufferin's brain that considered such an organisation essential so that "the Government might be kept informed regarding the best Indian public opinion."⁷² It would thus appear that the idea of the Congress party as a political organisation originated with Dufferin. It is rather difficult to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the part played by Dufferin in shaping the destinies of the Congress.⁷³ Hume had addressed his famous letter to the Calcutta graduates as we know, on March 1, 1883. A cursory perusal of this letter quoted already will convince that Hume had made up his mind to start a political organisation to agitate for constitutional reforms long before the arrival of Lord Dufferin.⁷⁴ Prof. Sundar Raman who attended the first Congress session as one of the members makes a very revealing as well as a convincing statement about Hume's original idea and Dufferin's role.⁷⁵ He writes: "Mr. Hume's idea was to rouse the conscience of the people of England by carrying on a persistent agitation in Great Britain with the support and encouragement of leading friends of India. Lord Dufferin considered the question from a purely private sympathiser's point of view and expressed his opinion that such an agitation in England was fore-doomed to failure, as all Englishmen were fully aware of the advantages of all kinds, economic, political, administrative etc. which Great Britain derived from her huge and passive Dependency. He also convinced Hume that the latter could secure his own aims best by confining the agitation to India, for the present and by making Indian public men all over

71. Masani, R. P., *op. cit.*, p. 302.

72. Reproduced in the *Indian Social Reformer* Jan. 4, 1936.

73. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, p. 137.

74. *Dufferin Papers* Rect. no. 5289, Letter No. 237 a. From A. O. Hume to Earl of Dufferin, April 8, 1885.

75. Rattary Austin: *The Indian National Congress, The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, January-April, 1889.

the land to start to organise and develop to its full strength a national organisation in India itself, conducted with zeal and discretion by her own leaders under Mr. Hume's sympathetic and courageous lead." If Professor Sunder Raman's statement may be taken as correct, it would reject the long-held view that Hume's original idea was to start an organisation for social reform.

That the credit for starting a political organisation to agitate for the association of the natives in the governance of the country is due to Hume and not to Dufferin is further clear from his observation in a letter, dated April 8, 1885, he wrote to the Viceroy regarding the serious grievances of the people of Thana in Bombay Presidency. "It will show you", he wrote, "to what lengths benevolent, bureaucratic despotism unchecked by public opinion may go.....some popular element must be infused into our governments, if we wish these to continue safe and the people to have fair play". In fact Dufferin had considerable objection to the political organisation to start with. In a letter (dated May 17, 1885) to Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay, Dufferin referred to his meeting with Hume when the latter informed him about his plan to organise a political convention of delegates from different parts of India, on the lines adopted by O. 'Connell previous to Catholic Emancipation. He expressed misgivings about such an assembly which would "but criticize the acts or policy of the Government, in formulating demands which probably it would be impossible to grant."⁷⁶ In his reply, Lord Reay informed Dufferin (letter dated May 24, 1885) that "Hume is the head-centre of an organisation from which emanated all the Ripon demonstrations, which has spread and is spreading all over India, and has for its object to bring native opinion into a focus."⁷⁷

Dufferin, who had cordial relations with Hume in the beginning, did not dissuade him from starting a political organisation. In fact he praised Hume in his letter to Reay; "Hume is clever

76. Earl of Dufferin, Private letter to Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay, May 17, 1885.

77. From Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay to Earl of Dufferin, Confidential letter, May 24, 1885.

and gentleman-like but seems to have a bee in his bonnet. Ripon told me that he knew a good deal of Natives and advised me to see him from time to time which I have done with both pleasure and profit."⁷⁸

There remains yet another controversial point as to how far the statement that the "congress was a child of Russo-Phobia" is true. Dr. Nandlal Chatterji has tried to prove that the "Congress was founded in fact as a precautionary move against an apprehended Russian invasion of India."⁷⁹ But, he has not been able to deduce any direct and convincing evidence in support of his contention. There is a possibility, however, that the critical state of affairs at the frontier during 1884 and 1885, when an open rupture between Russia and Afghanistan over the disputed Panjdeh territory seemed imminent and would have involved Britain also,⁸⁰ might have been one of the many factors which suggested Hume the advisability of checkmating the growing unrest in India by diverting it into constitutional channels. It may also explain the position of neutralists like Dufferin and his Government in earlier stages. But there is no direct evidence in our possession in support of this contention. There is, however, no doubt that the Indian statesmen were fully alive to the exigencies of the problem. Dadabhai had declared: "The Indian authorities are doing everything in their power to tempt Russia to invade India, both by their policy of dissatisfying the Indian people with their rule and by making an easy road for Russia through the mountains of Afghanistan at our expense."⁸¹

Wedderburn referred to the possibility of a Russian invasion in his presidential address at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress, 1889 and added that the Russian generals

78. *Op. cit.*, f.n., p. 76.

79. *The Modern Review*, Oct. 1950, pp. 273-75.

80. In fact the "invasion of India by land has been the nightmare of Anglo-Indian statesmen from the time when Napoleon proposed to Russia in 1808 in his scheme for a joint expedition to India through Persia from Constantinople." For details refer to Lall, A, *The Life of Marquis of Dufferin & Ava*, pp. 85, 87, 88, 99, 143.

81. Masani, R. P. *op. cit.*, p. 358.

depended for success on "a hoped for rising of the native population."⁸² W. S. Blunt noted in his Diary "Russia might well appear as an ally, a liberator from the deadly embrace of our financial system, a friend of liberty, sound economy and material progress which is to say that Russia should not, in exchange for a new commercial pact with herself, offer to establish India in complete Home Rule, and thus outbid us in the popular affection."⁸³

To resume our narrative, Hume's appeal issued at the psychological moment went home and the politically conscious Indians who were already looking for an opportunity, at once joined hands with the result that a National Union was formed towards the close of 1884.⁸⁴

In March 1885, as the official proceedings of the Congress relate, it was decided to "hold a meeting of representatives from all parts of India at the then coming Christmas." According to the biographer of Tyabji, Hume's original intention was to hold the first session of the Indian National Union in the Bombay Presidency.⁸⁵ Mahadev Govind Ranade, formerly a judge of the Bombay High Court, seemed to have prevailed upon Hume to hold it at Poona.⁸⁶ And, as the official proceedings relate, Poona was considered to be the most suitable place for the purpose and a circular was issued to the effect that a conference of the Indian National Union would be held at Poona from the 25th to the 31st December, 1885. "The Conference will be composed of delegates (1) leading politicians well-acquainted with the English language—from all parts of Bengal, Bombay and Madras presidencies. Amongst the qualifications for membership were:—

- (1) An unblemished record, public and private, (2) and earnest and unwavering desire to improve the status, either material, mental, moral or political, of the people of India,
- (3) marked natural intelligence adequately developed by

82. *Congress Presidential Addresses*, Natesan & Co., I, p. 57.

83. Blunt, W. S., *op. cit.*, p. 292.

84. Mazumdar, A. C., *op. cit.*, p. 47.

85. Tyabji, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

86. Ray, P.C., *Life and Times of C. R. Das*, 1929, p. 121.

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education, (4) a willingness to sink when occasion demands this sacrifice, selfish and personal in altruistic and public considerations and (5) independence of character coupled with sobriety of judgement.⁸⁷ The direct objects of the Conference will be (i) to enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other; (ii) to discuss and decide upon the political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year." It was also stated that the "Union is prepared when necessary to oppose by all constitutional methods, all authorities, high or low, here or in England whose acts or commissions are opposed to those principles of the Government of India laid down from time to time, by the British sovereign but it holds the continued affiliations of India to Great Britain at any rate for a period far exceeding the range of any practical forecast to be absolutely essential for the interest of our own national development."⁸⁸

This conference was expected to "form the germ of a native parliament and if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions." It was also made clear to the delegates that they will have to "find their own way to and from Poona—but from the time they reach the Poona Railway Station until they again leave it, everything that they can need, carriage, accommodation, food etc. will be provided for them gratuitously." Chiplankar and others of the Sarvajanic Sabha had consented to form a Reception Committee and meet these expenses from the reception fund.⁸⁹

As for the delegates, the founders hoped that "exclusive of our Poona friends, the Bombay Presidency including Sindh and the Berar will furnish about 20 delegates, Madras and Lower

87. Wedderburn, *op. cit.* p. 53-54.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

89. *Proc. of the First Indian National Congress Session, 1885 (Madras)*, 1905. Also see Modi's *Pherozechah Mehta*, I, 180.

Bengal each about the same number and the N.W. Provinces, Oudh and the Punjab together about half this number.”⁹⁰

Select Committees were formed at all the principal towns as Karachi, Ahmadabad, Surat, Bombay, Poona, Madras, Calcutta, Banaras (Varanasi), Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra and Lahore, all of which promised to send their representatives to the coming session.

Having made all preparations in India, Hume left for England where he enlisted the support of such liberal-minded British politicians as Lord Ripon, John Bright, M.P., R.T. Reid, M.P., Lord Dalhousie, the heir and successor of the Indian Governor-General, and many other friends of India.⁹¹ He also made arrangements for the reception and publication of the Union's messages by a section of the liberal Press including *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Scotsman*, *The Glasgow*, *Daily Mail*⁹² etc., and returned to India in time for the first session of the Congress. Several cases of cholera were reported in Poona and it was decided that the National Conference which in the meantime had been named as the Indian National Congress, should instead meet at Bombay⁹³ and the delegates were to be accommodated in the “Gokuldas Tejpal Boarding School, Sanskrit College and Library.”⁹⁴ The first Congress was fairly well-attended. There were not less than 72 delegates⁹⁵ (may be more as “It is feared that some few names have been omitted from the Register”). And as for its representative character, the proceedings state “all the leading native political associations and the principal Anglo-native newspapers were

90. *Proc. First Indian National Congress Session 1885*, p. 2.

91. Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Proc. First, I.N.C.*, 1885, p. 4.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.* From Karachi, 2; Viramgaum 1; Surat 6; Poona 6; Calcutta, 3; Agra, 2; Benares, 1; Simla, 1; Lucknow, 31; Allahabad 1, Lahore 1, Ambala 1, Ahmedabad 3, Bombay 18, Madras 8, Behrampore 1, Masulipatnam 1, Chingleput 2, Tanjore 1, Kumbakonam 1, Cuddapah-Ananthapore 1, Bellary; 1. *Ibid.*, p. 4. For names of delegates refer to *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

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represented, there were members of Legislative Councils, Presidents and members of Municipal Committees and Local Boards and is difficult to conceive any gathering of this restricted number thoroughly representative of the entire nation than was the Congress"⁹⁶ about which the *Times* Correspondent in India wrote rather in exaggerated terms. "The whole of India was represented from Madras to Lahore, from Bombay to Calcutta. For the first time perhaps, since the world began India as a nation met together."⁹⁷ But as we shall discuss later on, the representative character of the Congress suffered from certain limitations as for example there were only a few Muhammadan delegates⁹⁸ and the Bengal too, was inadequately represented due to, as the President of the first Congress Session W. C. Bannerjee declared, "a series of misfortunes, deaths, illness and the like."⁹⁹ Among the delegates at the first Congress who were afterwards to occupy the Presidential chair were Dadabhai Naroji (1886, 1893, and 1906). M. R. Sayani (1896), N. G. Chandravarkar (1900) and C. Vijayaragavachariar (1920).¹⁰⁰ W. C. Bannerjee,¹⁰¹ as stated already, was elected President of the Congress on the proposal of Hume seconded by Subramania Iyer. "The first impression one gets.....and it was confirmed to me afterwards by several who were present," so writes Frederick Grubb, "is the studiously moderate tone of all the speeches and resolutions."¹⁰² The objects of the Congress, as set out in W. C. Bannerjee's Presidential address were:—

96. *Ibid*, p. 6.

97. *Ibid*, p. 78.

98. M. R. Sayani and A. M. Dharamsi, *Proc. First Congress Session*, 1885, p. 5.

99. *Ibid*, p. 89.

100. Frederick Grubb's article in the '*Hindu*' Dec. 27, 1935.

101. Supported by Hon'ble K. T. Telang. *Proc. First Indian National Congress Session*, 1885, p. 7.

102. It is interesting to recall that W. C. Bonnerjee who to all intents and purposes lived the life of an Englishman whose full name many Bengalis of his day hardly knew—had all his life ridiculed all sorts of political agitation until he became a convert to the nationalist ideas of his day by the fact of his having brushed aside by the Govt. for the crime of being a 'native' when the appointment of the Standing Counsel of the High Court of Calcutta fell vacant". (Prithwis Chandra Ray: *Life and Times of C. R. Das*, Madras, 1929, pp. 121-22.)

- (a) The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in the various parts of the Empire.
- (b) The eradication by direct friendly personal inter-course of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord Ripon's memorable reign.
- (c) The authoritative record after this has been carefully elicited by the fullest discussion of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the social questions of the day.
- (d) The determination of the lines upon which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interests."¹⁰³

The first Congress gave it attention to a number of important subjects and the resolutions were passed demanding:—

- (1) The Royal Commission of Indian Administration.
- (2) Abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State.
- (3) Creation of Legislative Councils for the N.W. Provinces and Oudh and the Punjab with the right of discussing the budget and of interpellation.
- (4) Reduction of military expenditure.
- (5) The introduction of simultaneous Public Service Examinations in England and India.¹⁰⁴ These in short constituted our political demands for nearly two decades,¹⁰⁵ or as

103. *Pro. First Indian National Congress Session, 1885*, p. 9.

104. Annie Besant, *op. cit.*, p. 13-14; A. C. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

105. *Ibid.*

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Grubb put it some of them were "hardy annuals in the Congress debates" for many years.¹⁰⁶ The benevolent attitude of the Government was clearly manifested by the presence of a large number of Government officials who freely took part in the deliberations and if we are to believe Sir Chintamani "the resolutions of the first Congress were settled at a private meeting held at the residence of Principal Wordsworth of Elphinstone College, and attended by other officials who included Sir William Wedderburn, Mr. Ranade, and Rai Bahadur Lala Baij Nath of Agra."¹⁰⁷ Ranade often took part in the deliberations at the open session of the Congress.¹⁰⁸ Bannerjee, on his part, praised the British Government for having done so much for the benefit of India and as he elaborated "She had given them order, she had given them the Railways, and above all she had given them the inestimable blessings of Western education."¹⁰⁹ And Hume, the General Secretary, while rising to acknowledge the compliments paid to him added that he must be allowed to propose, on the principle of better late than never the giving of cheers and that not only three, but three times three and if possible thrice that, for one the latchet of whose shoe he was unworthy to loose, one to whom they were all dear, to whom they were all children—need he say, Her most Gracious Majesty the Queen Empress."¹¹⁰ That even this cordial atmosphere and moderate demands of the First Congress did not meet with the approval of the Anglo Indians was evident from the editorial of the *Times* which alluding to the resolutions passed by the Congress said "if India can govern itself, our stay in the country is no longer called for. All we have to do is to preside over the construction of the new system and then

106. *The Hindu*, December 27, 1935.

107. Chintamani, C. Y., *Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, 1937, pp. 18-19.

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Proc. First Indian National Congress Session*, 1885, p. 9.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

to leave it to work. The lawyers and schoolmasters and newspaper editors will step into the vacant place and will conduct affairs with no help from us. Those who know India will be the first to recognise the absurd impracticability of such a change" and then it went on to comment on the "un-representative character" of the Congress.¹¹¹

111. *Ibid*, Appendix 'C', p. 80.

Indian Revolutionaries Abroad (1891-1919)

BY

N. N. BHATTACHARYA

I

Raja Rammohun Roy during his stay in England (1832-33) exchanged his ideas with Robert Owen,¹ the great socialist thinker and a constant friend of the working class, and since then European political ideas began to influence the English-educated Indians, especially the young Bengalis and their successors. But influence, although valuable in itself, was mainly academic in character, having little bearing on revolutionary political activities. In the sphere of practical politics, the Indian intelligentsia of nineteenth century had pinned their faith on the parliamentary principles of liberalism and on the honesty and sense of justice of the British people. Still it is interesting to note that the inauguration of the First International in 1864 was congratulated by a Bengali journal called *Somaprakasa*² and that in 1871 the General Council of the First International received a letter from someone of Calcutta asking for powers to start a section of the International in India.³ This proves that there were at least a few persons in India who were interested in revolutionary activities going on in different parts of the globe. Within a short period of time, however, revolutionary sentiments were spread far and wide—in different parts of Asia, Europe and America—and a large number of students, who chose a life of exile, did contribute much to the cause of India's freedom, not only by revealing the ugliness of British rule in India to foreigners hitherto misled by the false propaganda of the British, but also by active participation in revolutionary plans and programmes which were marked by sacrifice and sufferings of all kinds.

1. Collet S. D., *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Ed. by D. K. Biswas and P. C. Ganguli, pp. 494-95.

2. Chatterjee G. in *Lenin in Contemporary Indian Press*, p. 100.

3. *The General Council of First International: 1870-71 Minutes*, p. 258; cf. Sehanabis in *Kāldantar* (Bengali Weekly) 5-9-1970.

II

The earliest revolutionary organisation in the pattern of a secret society was the "Lotus and Dagger"⁴ which was set up in England by Arabindo Ghosh in 1891. Nothing precise is known about its function. Charu Chandra Dutt, one of the recruits of Arabindo, said that they came into close touch with the Irish freedom fighters who offered the Indians eight parliamentary seats of their own,⁵ provided India should give them funds—a proposal which was, however, rejected by Dadabhai Naoroji who was then a member of the British Parliament and a propagandist of the Indian National Congress.

The credit of establishing in England a more important organisation which in course of time acquired a complete revolutionary character goes to Shyamji Krishnavarma⁶ who left India for good in 1897 with the belief that there was no justice in India, which he experienced in the arrest of the Natu brothers and trial of Balgangadhar Tilak. Shyamji established six lecture-ships of Rs. 1,000 each for Indian students visiting foreign countries and thus gathered round him a group of young men of sacrificing spirit. He did not subscribe to the moderate views of Dadabhai Naoroji and preferred to remain aloof from the London branch of the Indian National Congress. He believed with Herbert Spencer that "resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative. Non-resistance hurts both altruism and egoism". When the Boer War broke out in 1899, he was displeased with M. K. Gandhi's pro-British role and made a statement of protest. Shyamji was constantly assisted by Sardar Singh Rana,⁷ a businessman and a patriot with revolutionary ideas, who was staying at Paris and by Madam Bhikhaji Rustam Cama,⁸ 'the Mother of Indian Revolution', who left India for Europe in

4. Raychaudhuri G. S., *Sri Arabinda O Bāṅgālāy Swadeshī Yug* (in Bengali), p. 54.

5. Dutt C. C. *Purāṇokathā* (in Bengali), pp. 6-7.

6. For the biography of Shyamji Krishnavarma see Bhattacharya A.C., *Europe Bhāratīya Biplabī Sādhana* (in Bengali), Ch. I; Sarda H. *Shyamji Krishnavarma*; Yajnik I. L. *Shyamji Krishnavarma: Life and Time of an Indian Revolutionary*.

7. Bhattacharya A. C., *op. cit.*, ch. II.

8. *Ibid.*, ch. III; cf. *Essays Presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar*, pp. 227 ff.

1902, and worked in London for some time with Dadabhai Naoroji, but subsequently came in close relation with Shyamji and Sardar Singh Rana. The latter, who left India in 1898, following the instance of Shyamji, offered three travelling fellowships of Rs. 2,000 each to Indian students for the purpose of recruiting revolutionaries, and organised a number of protest-meetings in Paris against British rule.

The Indian Home Rule Society was founded by Shyamji and his associates on the 18th of February, 1905. The India House was also founded for the Indian students, which was subsequently manned by such well-known revolutionaries like V. D. Savarkar, Lala Hardayal, Madanlal Dhingra, Birendranath Chattopadhyay, Tirumal Achariya and others. Regarding the general object, both of the Indian Home Rule Society and of its organ, the *Indian Sociologist*, Shyamji wrote: "No systematic attempt has ever been made by the Indians to enlighten the British public with regard to the grievances, demands and aspirations of the people of India. It will be our duty and privilege to plead the cause of India and its unrepresented millions before the bar of the public opinion in Great Britain and Ireland."⁹ The *Indian Sociologist* kept a vigilant eye upon the day to day politics of India. It expressed its views against the moderate leader Gokhale, supported the candidacy of Tilak for Congress Presidentship and protested against the massacre at Barisal Political conference and the arrest of Surendranath Banerjee which took place in 1906. In the next year (1907), in connexion with the celebration of the anniversary of the Indian revolution of 1857 in the India House, the *Indian Sociologist* published a daring placard, originally issued in April 1859 by Richard Congreve, which was a protest against the thanksgiving ceremony on the victorious conclusion of the war against the Indian sepoys. In the same year, in view of a protest meeting of the Indians against the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh which was held in London, it published an exciting appeal of Madam Cama. Hemchandra Kanungo, a revolutionary who was staying in Paris, wrote that the *Indian Sociologist* maintained a close relation with

⁹ Majumdar R. C., *History of the Freedom Movement of India*, II, p. 318.

eminent journals like the *Gaelic American*, Hyndman's *Justice* and the *Jugāntar* of Bengal.¹⁰

The British press and politicians, getting alarmed at their activities, made attempts to 'wash the brains' of the Indian students. In a meeting which the British authorities organised for this purpose under the presidency of Lord Lamington, Sir William Lee-Warner, who was one of the speakers, called Kunjabihari Bhattacharya, an Indian revolutionary, "a dirty nigger", and this remark enraged the audience so much that one of them, Basudeb Bhattacharya struck a blow on the face of Sir William. The target of British press was, however, Shyamji whose views were growing more and more revolutionary. Originally he stood for passive resistance but later admitted the necessity of violent activities in response to the demand of the situation. Fully conscious of the British conspiracy against him Shyamji thought it wise to leave London and settle in Paris which he did accordingly in 1907. In Paris he joined Sardar Singh Rana and Madam Cama.

During the absence of Shyamji, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar assumed the political leadership of the India House. Savarkar came to England in 1906. In India he had an organisation which was known as *Abhinava Bharat*, a militant organisation having its branches in Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Mysore and Madhya Pradesh. The proceedings of the Nasik Conspiracy Case show that Savarkar used to send secretly arms to India from the Continent. A member of Savarkar's Indian organisation, P. N. Bapat was sent to Paris to learn the art of bomb-making who worked along with Hem Chandra Das and Mirza Abbas who were also there for the same purpose.¹¹ Another associate of Shyamji, Lala Hardayal left London in 1907, and after staying for a short time in India, rejoined Shyamji in Paris in 1908. Hardayal had by this time become an extremist and thought it prudent to transfer the centre of his activities to America.¹²

Both Madam Cama and Sardar Singh Rana were elected to represent India at the International Socialist Congress which met

10. *Bāṅgālāy Biplab Pracheṣṭā* (in Bengali), pp. 178-79.

11. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, II, p. 308.

12. Hardayal, *Fortyfour Months in Germany and Turkey*, p. 29.

at Stuttgart on the 18th of August 1907. The British labour leader, Ramsay Macdonald, who later, became the Prime Minister of England, tried his best to prevent their participation in the Congress, but he failed, thanks to the efforts of the German Socialist leaders Bebel, Liebknecht and Luxemburg and the British labour leader Hyndman who had been always friendly with the Indian revolutionaries. Madam Cama moved there the following resolution: "That the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of India, and lovers of freedom all over the world ought to co-operate in freeing from slavery the fifth of the human race inhabiting that oppressed country, since the perfect social state demands that no people should be subject to any despotic and tyrannical form of government."¹³ In support of her resolution Madam Cama made a fiery speech and waved a tri-coloured Indian National Flag which was probably designed by Hemchandra Kanungo. The resolution however, was not allowed by Singer, the President, to put to vote on a technical ground.

On July 1, 1909, Curzon Wyllie was shot dead by Madanlal Dhingra who "attempted to shed English blood as a humble revenge for the inhuman hangings and deportations of patriotic Indian youths."¹⁴ A meeting of the Indians condemning the act of Dhingra was held in London under the presidency of Aga Khan where Savarkar made a speech of protest against such condemnation especially when Dhingra's case was sub-judice. Personally Shyamji did not support such feats of individual violence, but Sardar Singh Rana and Madam Cama thought that Dhingra's action was justified. Although Dhingra was sentenced to death, Irish revolutionaries paid glowing tributes to him, and it is interesting to note that Lloyd George and Winston Churchill admired his patriotism.¹⁵ Savarkar was also arrested and sent to India as the principal accused of the Nasik Conspiracy Case. On his way to India Savarkar made a desperate but futile attempt to escape to the French territory. However, with all these events the activities of the India House of London practically

13. Bhattacharya A. C., *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

14. Keer D. *Savarkar and His Times*, p. 55.

15. *Ibid*, pp. 56-57; Blunt W. S., *My Diaries*, II, pp. 276, 288.

came to an end. Shyamji continued to edit the *Indian Sociologist* in Paris till the outbreak of the World War in 1914, and then he left Paris for Switzerland where he stayed till his death in 1930. Birendra Nath Chattopadhyay, who was in England since 1903, and Tirumal Achariya left England for Paris to avoid arrest. In 1910, Madam Cama and Chattopadhyay became members of the French Socialist Party. During the World War I Madam Cama was imprisoned in the Vici fort and Sardar Singh Rana was deported to the island of Martinique by the French Government for their pro-German leanings.¹⁶

III

In the U.S.A. nationalistic activities were carried on by the Indian students and also by the Indian working class settled therein who drew their inspiration from Shyamji's *Indian Sociologist* and Madam Cama's *Bandemataram* and *Talwar* which had unrestricted entry into that country. In 1907 the Indian Independence League was established in California by Khagendra Chandra Das, Tarak Nath Das, Adhar Chandra Laskar, Pandurang Khankhoje and a few other Indian students. The League had two branches and 499 members, and its main activities were to preach militant nationalism among the Sikh settlers in America and to send revolutionary leaflets to India. It also had a journal known as *Free Hindustan* which was edited by Tarak Nath Das. Similar organisations very soon developed among the Indian settlers in different parts of America. The one of Portland became prominent in 1911-12 under the leadership of Kanshiram Joshi. Such organisations under different groups or individual leaders which sprang up at different times finally culminated into the formation of Ghadar Party in 1913. According to Randhir Singh,¹⁷ the historian of the Ghadar movement, two meetings of the

16. On 12th August 1936 "Madam Cama died unnoticed in Bombay amidst ungrateful surroundings" (Savarkar). In her old age she was probably inclined towards Communism. In an article published in the *Inprecor* of 1st May, 1924 (IV, pt. XXVII, pp. 263-65) one Rustam Shama is mentioned as 'the famous old revolutionary who is now a communist.' Evidently it refers to Madam Gama, since C in Syriac alphabet pronounces like S. (See Shehnaish in *Kālāntar*, 3-10-1970).

17. Singh R., *The Ghadar Heroes*, pp. 8-9.

Indian workers were held respectively on 13th March and 1st November, 1913, at Astoria, and it was decided to establish the 'Hindi Association of America' and to bring out a weekly paper, *Ghadar*, in different languages. Later on, the name *Ghadar* came to denote the party itself which was formed with Sohan Singh Bhakna as President and Hardayal as Secretary. The Central Office of the party was at 436 Hill Street, San Francisco. In 1918 the party had its own building at 5 Wood Street.¹⁸

The Ghadar party believed that freedom of India could be achieved only by an armed national revolution, and its main activities, besides the regular campaign of lectures, were the publication of the *Ghadar* in Gurumukhi, Urdu, Hindi and English and various books and pamphlets. In 1914 the New Immigration Policy of the U.S.A. created a feeling of indignation among the Indians and Hardayal, as the leader of the Ghadar party, not only denounced in strong language the discriminating policy of the American government, but also actively participated in American politics, supporting the cause of the Syndicalist party of America and making public speeches from its platform. Eventually Hardayal had to leave America for Switzerland. During his absence Ram Chandra became the leader of the Ghadar party and invited Bhagwan Singh and Muhammad Barkatulla, who were then in Japan, to come to his aid. They joined him towards the end of May 1914. Barkatulla was a strong advocate of anti-British Pan-Islamism and the editor of a paper called the *Islamic Fraternity*.

IV

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the revolutionary activities of the Indians living abroad assumed a new character. An organisation, which later came to be known as the Indian Independence Committee or the Berlin Committee, was set up in Berlin. Indian revolutionaries who were staying in Germany were trying to secure German help for a rising against the British in India, and when the war broke out the

18. For different views regarding the genesis of the Ghadar party see Majumdar, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 397 ff, also Datta B.N., *Aprakāṣita Rājnaitik Itihāsa* (in Bengali), pp. 228ff.

Germans also became equally eager to utilise the revolutionary activities of the Indians against the British. There is a good deal of controversy regarding the genesis of the Berlin Committee.¹⁹ According to Bhupendra Nath Datta, who was himself an influential collaborator of the Berlin Committee, a meeting was held between Baron Oppenheim and Birendra Nath Chattopadhyay on September 3, 1914, as a result of which a committee was formally constituted with the name 'The German Union of Friendly India'. Albercht became its President, Oppenheim and Sukhthankar Vice-presidents, and Dhiren Sarkar, the Secretary. After some time Sukhthankar was replaced by Chattopadhyay and Dhiren by Dr. Mueller. There were 17 other Indian members in the Committee. By the middle of 1915 the German Union of Friendly India was renamed as Indian Independence Committee and its constitution was thoroughly changed. Its office was filled up solely by the Indians.²⁰ But according to another account, which Dr. Majumdar quotes from the work of Landau, it was Hardayal who organised the Indian Independence Committee with the help of Von Wesendonck who was the secretary in charge of the Indian section of the German Foreign Office.²¹ Likewise Chempakaraman Pillai of Kerala, who left India in 1908, is credited with playing an important role. Before the outbreak of the war he set up at Zurich an association, called the International Pro-Indian Committee, and started a journal called *Pro-India* and it is said that he came in agreement with Chattopadhyay, Abdul Hafiz, Dr. Prabha-kar, Bhupendra Nath Dutta and Barkatulla which marked the inception of the Indian Independence Committee. It therefore appears that like the Ghadar party of America, different streams headed by individual leaders coalesced into a single organisation, the Berlin Committee, and the process was quickened by the German Official enthusiasm.

V

The Berlin Committee established contact with the Indian revolutionaries in U.S.A. through German Embassy in that country and it was decided that the Ghadar party would carry on

19. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 404 ff.

20. Datta B. N., *op. cit.*, chs., I-III

21. Landau H., *The Enemy Within*, p. 29.

revolutionary work in accordance with the direction of Berlin Committee. We have a fairly authentic account of the Indo-German activities in U.S.A.²² Ram Chandra of the Ghadar party was entrusted with the task of sending men and arms to India. He was receiving monthly a thousand dollars from the German Consulate. Although he was able to send some men through the Chinese ports, Shanghai and Swato, little progress was made in securing arms. It is said that Franz Von Papen of the German embassy in U.S.A. managed to get arms and ammunition in considerable quantity which were sent to San Diego, California, in January 1915. It was planned that these would be carried by the Schooner, *Annie Larsen*, and then transferred to the tanker *Maverick*. With the arms *Annie Larsen* arrived at the meeting place, but there was no trace of *Maverick*, and thus the whole scheme fell through.²³

Heramba Gupta, who was working in the U.S.A. on behalf of the Berlin Committee, was replaced by Chandra Chakravarty in February 1916 by orders of the German authorities. The latter, as an organiser of the Pan-Asiatic League, tried to enlist support of China and Japan. It was proposed that China and Japan, by forming an alliance with Germany, would help the Indian revolutionaries by sending forces and arms to them across the border. But no positive response came from China and Japan. Sun Yat-sen, who was a source of inspiration to the Indian revolutionaries, unexpectedly disappointed them. The net result was shocking. Men sent to India through the Chinese ports by Ram Chandra of the Ghadar party were arrested.²⁴ Arms could not be secured. In one report Chakravarty admitted that in a period of six months no more than two hundred pistols could be sent. It is indeed surprising why the Germans themselves did not supply arms and why Gupta and Chakravarty had to negotiate with China and Japan for the same purpose.

22. The following account is based upon Majumdar, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 414 cf. Brown G.T. 'The Hindu Conspiracy 1914-17' in *Pacific Historical Review*, XVII, pp. 289-310.

23. See Sec., VIII.

24. *Sedition Committee Report*, p. 149.

However, Chakravarthi was arrested in U.S.A. on 6th March 1917. Soon after his arrest he disclosed the identity of his associates, as a result of which, on April 7, 1917 Ram Chandra and sixteen other Indians were arrested in San Fransisco. The famous San Fransisco trial opened on November 20, 1917 in which 105 persons were accused as conspirators. On the last day of the trial Ram Chandra was shot dead in the court by one of his comrades, Ram Singh, who in turn was also killed by a Marshall. The Judgment was delivered on April 23, 1918. Of the original 105 accused, 29 were convicted. Thus ended the Indo-German conspiracy in the U.S.A.

VI

It appears that all the attempts to despatch arms to India failed owing to the reluctance of the Germans to take this business seriously. M. N. Roy said in his *Memoirs* that on the suggestion of Helfferich a plan was made to storm the Andamans by the German ships staying in the Dutch harbours, but it failed because the Germans refused to play such a serious game. The German Consul-General disappeared mysteriously on the way when he was expected to issue orders for the execution of the plan. Later on, a proposal was given to the Germans that if they gave India money she might herself purchase arms from different countries. This proposal was sent to the German Embassy in the U.S.A. and in reply M. N. Roy was asked to go to China and meet there the German Ambassador Admiral Hintze. Roy thereupon left Java and went to the Philippines, Japan and Korea *en route* to China. In Japan Rash Behari Bose asked him to wait and told him that the liberation of India was conditional upon the success of the bigger mission of Japan, namely, to free Asia from white domination. He met Sun Yatsen who told him that if sufficient amount of money could be raised, there would be no difficulty in collecting necessary arms and ammunition and handing them over to India at any place on the frontier. With this proposal Roy met Admiral Hintze and had long talks with him. The Admiral showed great interest in the said proposal and an agreement was made at Hankow, but all on a sudden, when the plan was finalised, the German Ambassador began to speak in a different language. Recalling this, Roy wrote: "The conversation with

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von Hintze dispelled my still lingering illusion about Germany's sympathy for the victims of British Imperialism."²⁵

VII

Indian revolutionaries also went to various countries of South East Asia, and men like Kshirod Gopal Mukherjee, Bhola Nath Chatterjee and others had already set up revolutionary organisations in those countries. Originally it was decided that Germans in Siam would attack Burma and that three ships, full of arms, would be sent to India. The invasion of Burma would be followed by revolutionary outbreaks in different parts of India under the leadership of Rashbihari Bose, Sachindra Sanyal and Jatindra Nath Mukherjee. The outbreak in India was to be held on 15th February, 1915, but the plan was disclosed by Kripal Singh, a police-informer who managed to get himself acquainted with the revolutionaries. Rashbihari thereupon fled to Japan. On the same day the Fifth Light Infantry at Alexandria Barracks of Singapore rose to a mutiny, which was, however, crushed very soon.²⁶

In March, 1915, Atmaram of the Ghadar Party met Jadugopal Mukherjee in Calcutta and assured him of arms coming through the German Consul-General of Bangkok. This was the plan referred to in the preceding section in connexion with the *Memoirs* of M. N. Roy. It was decided that three ships would be used for this purpose: the first was to go to Hatia, the second to Balasore while the third to the Andamans for conquering the islands and releasing the political prisoners staying therein. It was also decided that from the Andamans the Germans along with the Indians would attack Rangoon and Singapore. But the scheme was disclosed as a result of which Phani Chakrabarty was arrested at Shanghai and Abani Mukherjee at Singapore. From Abani's notebook a few names of Indian revolutionaries were found and they were also arrested. Of them Amar Singh of Pako was later sentenced to death.²⁷

25. Bhattacharjee G. P., *Evolution of Political Philosophy of M. N. Roy*, pp. 19-20.

26. MacMunn G. *The Turmoil and Tragedy in India, 1914 and After* pp. 106-13.

27. Bhattacharyya N. N., *Bhārater Svādhinatā Sangrāmer Itihās*, pp. 113 ff.

In May 1915, the Berlin Committee sent Vincent Kraft to Batavia with a similar programme of invading the Andamans, but nothing came out of this plan. Kraft was arrested at Singapore. In July 1915, the Berlin committee sent Dr. Daus Dekkar, but he was arrested in China. According to the British Official version, "Gupta returned to San Francisco from Berlin to organise the Siam expedition by which depots were to be established on the Siamese frontiers of Burma where Indian revolutionaries could be trained by German officers, equipped with arms, and launched against Burma. There Ramchand sent many of the Ghadar Party, while the Sikh, Bhagwan Singh was despatched to Japan, China, and Manila to collect recruits from among the Indians serving there. But most of these were arrested at Bangkok in August, 1915, shortly after their arrival there."²⁸

VIII

Now we shall give a brief note on the Indian consequences of the activities of the Berlin Committee and the Ghadar Party. As soon as the Indian revolutionaries came to know of the arrangements being made by Germany for sending arms, the plan for a general rising took definite shape under the leadership of Rashbihari Bose, Sachindra Sannyal, Vinayak Rao Kaple, Damodar Swarup, Pratap Singh, Avadh Bihari, Balmukund, Bachcha Singh, Kartar Singh, Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, Jatindra Nath Mukherjee, Nalini Mukherjee, and others. It was decided that on February 21, 1915, the sepoys in the cantonment all over North India would suddenly attack the English soldiers, and thus begin a countrywide revolution. As we have seen above²⁹ the plan was disclosed by Kripal Singh and the whole plot miscarried. One of the plotters, Pingley made another desperate attempt, but he was arrested and tried along with his followers in the Lahore Conspiracy Case.³⁰

On behalf of the Bengal group, headed by Jatindra Nath Mukherjee, Naren Bhattacharya (who later became famous as M. N. Roy), adopting the pseudonym Martin, went to Batavia

28. MacMunn, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

29. Sec. VII.

30. *Sedition Committee Report*, p. 157.

and making arrangements to receive the cargo of the *Maverick*, which was said to consist of 30,000 rifles with 400 rounds of ammunition each and 2 lakhs of rupees, wired to Harry and Sons, a bogus business concern managed by Hari Kumar Chakrabarti, a well known revolutionary, that the 'business was helpful.' The task of taking delivery of the cargo of the *Maverick* was entrusted upon Jadugopal Mukherjee. He communicated with a zamindar in the vicinity of Rai Mangal who had promised to provide all sorts of help. It was hoped that the ship would arrive by 1st of July 1915. Some men under Atul Ghosh kept constant watch from boats. But the *Maverick* did not arrive. On 3rd July, 1915, the revolutionaries received a messages that the German Consul in Siam was sending by boat a consignment of 5,000 rifles and ammunition to Rai Mangal. But this also did not arrive.³¹ On 7th August, 1915, the police searched the premises of Harry and Sons and arrested some revolutionaries. Then they turned their attention to Balasore where the leader Jatindra Nath Mukherjee and his associates were staying with the hope of receiving arms. After a heroic fight with the police, Jatindra and his associates were killed.

IX

Turkey's entry into the war against Britain created a strong anti-British feeling in the Muslim states, and attempt was made by the Indian revolutionaries living abroad, and especially the Berlin Committee, to utilise this feeling in their favour. Chempakaramen Pillai, of whom we had already occasion to refer, made an attempt to induce the Indian prisoners of war to join the Indian National Volunteer Corps, organised by him, and chose Mesopotamia as the centre for his Corps to wage war against the English.³² At the beginning of 1915, Barkatullah, Kersamp and Tarak Nath Das went to Istambul where they were received by Enver Pasha and were assured by the Turkish Government of help in the task of formulating a plan of enlisting the Indian war prisoners into a revolutionary army. But this plan could not be worked with success on account of the communal spirit between the Hindu and Muslim soldiers resulting from the par-

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

32. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, II, p. 412.

tiality shown to the latter by the Turks. A revolutionary committee was also set up in Iran with headquarters in Berlin. Attempts were also made to combine the Muslim states against the British, and Obeidullah carried on negotiations for this purpose with various Arab states. He maintained close contact with the *Mujahidins* of North Western India,³³ a Pan-Islamic group determined to destroy the British rule and create a Muslim India, and left secretly for Kabul where he met other revolutionaries from India and got himself specially acquainted with Raja Mahendrapratap who came to Afghanistan, along with Von Hentig and Barkatullah, as the head of an Indo-German Mission. Mahendrapratap who was especially honoured by the Kaiser himself carried with him 26 letters from Bethmann Hollweg, the German Chancellor, addressed to Indian Princes requesting them to rise against the British and assuring them of the German support. The Mission on its way visited the Turkish Sultan at Istanbul who gave him a letter for the Amir of Afghanistan. His associate Barkatullah procured a *futwa* from Sheikh-ul-Islam asking the Muslims of India to act in union with the Hindus. On its way to Persia Mahendrapratap's Mission met another Mission led by Niedermayer. On 2 October, 1915, the Mission reached Kabul and was received by King Habibullah. A Provisional Government of India was set up in Kabul on 1st December 1915 with Mahendrapratap as its President and Barkatullah and Obeidullah as the Prime Minister and Home Minister respectively. This Provisional Government sent several missions to the Indian princes and tried to come to some kind of understanding with Russia.³⁴

Shortly after Obeidullah left for Kabul, his followers Mahmud Hassan and Mian Ansari, met Ghalib Pasha, then Turkish Military Governor of Hedjas and obtained from him a declaration of *jihad* (holy war) against the British and distributed its copies to the frontier tribes of India. A scheme of a Pan-Islamic army, to be formed under the active guidance of Turkish Government and the Sheriff of Mecca with its headquarters at Medina and subordinate commands at Constantinople, Teheran and Kabul was chalked by Obeidullah who wrote a series of letters to different influential persons of the Muslim world. These letters were

33. *Sedition Committee Report*, pp. 174-75.

34. See Mahendrapratap's *My Life Story of Fiftyfive Years*.

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dated 9th July 1916, written on yellow silk and sewn up inside the lining of the coat of a special messenger who was to convey them in person to Mahmud Hasan for sending to proper places. But this 'silk letter conspiracy' was disclosed, and no positive result came out of it.³⁵

X

The famous San Francisco trial, mentioned above, marked the end of the Indo-German revolutionary activities in the U.S.A. Chandra Chakravarty and Se Kunna were arrested on 6th March 1917, and this was followed by the arrests of Heramba Gupta, Agnes Smedley, Sailendra Nath Ghosh, Pulin Bihari Bose, Tarak Nath Das, Bhai Bhagwan, Dhiren Sarkar and others. The German agents—Frank Bopp, Von Schack, Wilhelm Von Brincken etc.—were also convicted in a supplementary trial. The Indo-German conspiracy thus disclosed, there was no scope for reviving the revolutionary activities once again in the U.S.A. A feeling of frustration pervaded among the revolutionaries of the Berlin Committee. The end of war could be seen, and Germany was inevitably running towards defeat and disaster. After 1917 the Committee devoted its energy mainly to the propaganda war giving up all hopes of a rebellion in India. In the International Socialist Conference held at Stockholm in 1917, the Berlin Committee took chance of raising the question of Indian independence. It sent a telegram to Trotsky at Brest Lito-vsk requesting him to uphold the cause of India and also sent one to Philip Snowden for the same purpose.

With the end of the First World War and the complete defeat of the Axis Powers, Germany ceased to be the theatre of the revolutionary activities of the Indians. They now became interested in the Soviet Union. The success of the socialist revolution in Russia, and the prospect of Soviet help to the Indian struggle for freedom inspired them evidently. The first to realise the great significance of the Russian revolution, with a thorough training in Marxian ideas, was M. N. Roy who had escaped to Mexico during the San Francisco trial and managed to become a prominent figure in the left-wing politics of that country. He

35. O'Dwyer M.F., *India as I knew it*, pp. 180-81.

was selected to head a delegation to the Second World Congress of the Communist International and in November 1919 he started for Moscow with a Mexican diplomatic pass-port. His training of Marxism was very helpful in securing a good ground there, and eventually he could become a favourite of Lenin who made him a member of the Presidium of the Communist International and the Head of its Eastern Department.

Roy was not, however, the first Indian revolutionary to go to the Soviet Union or to meet Lenin. In May, 1919, Raja Mahendrapratap along with Tirumal Acharya and Abdur Rob Peshwari, met Lenin in Moscow, and in June Kananat Karim Elahi Zhacharia had the occasion to address the third Congress of the Turkistan Communist Party. Obeidulla, who was a minister of the Provisional Government of India in Kabul, went to Russia in October 1919 to see the consequences of the revolution and to draw the attention of the Soviet Government to the cause of the Indian freedom movement. Barkatullah went as the personal ambassador of King Amanulla of Afghanistan and in one of his lectures in the Soviet Union, he invited Communist help to crush the British power in India which, according to him, was the biggest representative of Asian capitalism. Dalip Singh Gill, another Indian revolutionary, also met Lenin for securing Russian help in the Indian freedom movement. But Roy was especially selected by the Soviet authorities for reasons we have stated above.

During the Khilafat movement in India, a number of Pan-Islamic workers, known as *Muhajirs*, left India for Turkey and a few of them could reach Tashkent in September 1920. M. N. Roy, on behalf of the Communist International, made contact with them and was able to convert some of these fanatic Pan-Islamists into confirmed communists. In 1921, the Berlin Committee group consisting of Birendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Bhupendra Nath Datta, Birendra Nath Dasgupta, Abdul Wahed, Panduran Khankhoje, Gholam Ambia Khan Lohani, Heramba Gupta, Nalini Gupta, and Agnes Smedley also went to Moscow. (Thus after the fall of Berlin, Moscow became the seat of Indian revolutionaries. How far this new atmosphere could speed up the Indian freedom movement, we propose to demonstrate in a subsequent article.

Bipincandra Pal's Synthesis of Modernity and Tradition

BY

ALEXANDER LIPSKI*

While there is general agreement about the meaning of tradition, there is no consensus regarding the definition of modernity. In this paper, for simplicity's sake, modernity will be equated with a rational, scientific and secular view of life.¹ This view was dominant in the West from the middle of the nineteenth century on. It was most clearly expressed by those whom Carlton Hayes categorized as the "Generation of Materialism," (1871-1900).² Man was certain that reason was the arbiter of all questions. He was confident that he could solve all of his problems and bring about a millennium. He strictly limited reality to those data which were subject to verification by the senses and he considered a transcendental view of life fanciful and outmoded. Towards the turn of the century, however, man's self-assuredness began to diminish. The more the frontiers of science advanced, the less certain were the scientists that they could fathom the universe. The cosmos seemed no longer a limited mass of matter; it began to look like an infinite universe of energy. As a matter of fact, one of the greatest astronomers, Sir James Jeans, concluded that the universe was more akin to a thought than a machine.³

*The author wishes to express his gratitude to the Long Beach California State College Foundation, whose financial support has made this study possible.

1. See also Lloyd I. and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 3-4.

2. C. J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900* (New York, 1935).

3. Sir James Jeans, *Physics and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 215-17.

Loss of scientific certitude naturally affected world view of modern western man. It is not by chance that the historian Franklin Le Van Baumer in his book *Main Currents of Western Thought* refers to our age as "The Age of Anxiety."⁴ He argues that in the twentieth century man feels insecure because he has no acceptable value system to guide him. Although technological advance continues, people are becoming aware of the fact that the increase in man's ability to produce gadgets does not necessarily make his life more meaningful. It moreover has become apparent that a wholly secularized life is devoid of ultimate purposefulness. The distinguished Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung, diagnosed the illness of the present age as being due to man's alienation from his Creator: "It is easy enough to drive the spirit out of the door, but when we have done so the salt of life grows flat—it loses its savour."⁵ Consequently, in the West, men such as the historian, Sir Arnold Toynbee, and the philosopher, Jacques Maritain, turned towards tradition, particularly in its spiritual aspect, to reconstruct their *Weltanschauung*.

In India, Bipinchandra Pāl (1858-1932) was acutely aware of the fact that the conflict between modernity and tradition applied equally to the East and the West, and he evolved a synthesis which he hoped would have relevance to both civilizations. As is well known, Bipinchandra revolted in his youth against hidebound tradition, especially against the over-ritualization of Hinduism, image veneration and caste strictures. He prided himself on being a rationalist. In 1877 he joined the Brahmo movement. In 1878, when a split occurred in the Brahmo Samaj, Bipinchandra sided not with Kesabchandra Sen but with the more radical wing represented by Sivanath Sastri and Anandamohan Bose who favoured an increased emphasis on social reforms. Over all, during his youth, Bipinchandra's religious concerns were largely confined to social action. While championing social reforms, Bipinchandra was actively opposed what he termed "medievalism": 1) unqualified monism which viewed the material universe as delusionary, 2)

4. Franklin Le Van Baumer, *Main Currents of Western Thought* (New York, 1964), pp. 587-97.

5. C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York, 1939), p. 142.

extreme asceticism, in particular, celibacy, 3) over-ritualization of religion, 4) "slavish" dependence upon a guru, 5) religious inequality (application of caste distinctions to religious worship).⁶

In the 1880's Bipincandra changed his religious views markedly. The problem of life and death was intimately connected with his transformation. In his *Memories of My Life and Times* he relates how profoundly he was affected by the death of his father in 1886 and the death of his first wife in 1890.⁷ He became intensely aware of the precariousness of man's earthly existence. According to those who accepted matter as the ultimate reality of the universe, death meant the disintegration of one's physical substance, i.e., one's total extinction. Such a view was unacceptable to Bipincandra. He was convinced that there must be more to man's life than his short earthly sojourn. Modern science failed to furnish him with a meaningful answer to the enigma of death. Gradually he came to the conclusion that the ancient Hindu scriptures offered satisfactory answers to his spiritual quest.

It is significant that it was through the writings of a westerner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, that Bipincandra found his way back to Hindu tradition. In this connection it must be borne in mind that the currents of thought of East and West were constantly intermingling. We are all aware, for example, of eastern influence on Sir Edwin Arnold and, at the same time, of Sir Edwin Arnold's impact on Gandhiji. The light of truth had travelled from the East to the West and back to the East: its intrinsic validity had remained unharmed. Acknowledging his indebtedness to the great American transcendentalist, Bipincandra states that Emerson converted him from dualism to monism. Henceforth he accepted a God who was immanent as well as transcendent and he no longer regarded matter and spirit as separate entities.⁸ Bipincandra

6. Alexander Lipski, "Bipincandra Pāl and Reform Hinduism," *History of Religions*, November, 1971.

7. Bipincandra Pāl, *Memories of My Life and Times* (Calcutta, 1932) II, 3, 19-34, 97-102.

8. *Ibid.*, II, 121.

found the strongest intellectual support for his changed world view in the Bhṛgu-Varuna dialogue of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. In his search for ultimate reality, Bhṛgu practised yogic meditation and eventually recognized that the essence of the universe was neither food, nor life, nor breath, nor mind, nor intellect, but bliss.⁹ In Bipincandra's estimation, Bhṛgu had proven 'scientifically' that there was a transcendent reality. Yoga thus emerged as the supreme science that could lead man to the realm beyond sense perception where neither microscopes nor telescopes were of any use.¹⁰

Modern science and the materialistic *Weltanschauung* suffered a spectacular defeat, as far as Bipincandra was concerned, when in 1912 the White Star liner "Titanic" sank as a result of a collision with an iceberg in the Atlantic. In an essay in *Sāhitya o sādhanā*, Bipincandra dramatically describes the disaster at sea. The "Titanic" appears to him the embodiment of western man's pride in his technological prowess; her extravagant conveniences, a symbol of man's hankering after physical comforts. In the drawing of her dancing, sporting passengers he perceives a warning against placing prime importance on sense indulgence.¹¹ Was this calamity not meant to remind us of the fact that the path of pleasure leads to perdition, whereas the yogic path of austerities leads to immortality? He added that this truth had not only been preached by India's ṛṣis, but by the sages of all religions. And he cited Christ's sayings: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me," and "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."¹² Renunciation and not dissipation was thus the way to true fulfilment.

9. Bipin Candra Pāl, *The Soul of India*, 4th ed., (Calcutta, 1958), pp. 151-55.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-84.

11. Bipincandra Pal, *Sāhitya o sādhanā* (Calcutta, 1959), 1st part, pp. 19-29.

12. *St. Matthew*, 19:21 and 16:25.

Bipincandra's reaction to the sinking of the "Titanic" provides a striking contrast to Voltaire's response to the earthquake of Lisbon in 1775. As a result of the earthquake the French *philosopher* lost all faith in a benevolent deity. Bengal's great son, Bipincandra, on the contrary, was inspired by the shipwreck of the "Titanic" to place his whole trust in divine protection, provided one adhered to the yogic path.

Bipincandra's reliance on yoga was partially due to the influence of his neo-Vaiṣṇava guru, Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gōsvāmi. He considered Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gōsvāmi as important as Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa for Bengal's religious renaissance. Personally he was more attracted to Vijaya Kṛṣṇa than to Rāmakṛṣṇa. He had no sympathy for Rāmakṛṣṇa's strict asceticism and preferred the process of gradual sublimation of the senses practised by Vijaya Kṛṣṇa. He claimed that it was much more natural to experience the divine through all senses than to suppress the senses altogether.¹³ One can, of course, argue that in the case of Rāmakṛṣṇa no mere suppression of the senses had occurred but that he had turned his sensory energy entirely towards the divine. Probably Bipincandra's criticism of Rāmakṛṣṇa was due to the fact that he considered Rāmakṛṣṇa an unqualified monist, hence medieval. On the other hand, Vijaya Kṛṣṇa was his ideal combination of modernity and tradition. In his writings, Bipincandra repeatedly mentioned that Neo-Vaiṣṇavas adhered to qualified monism which he equated with a modern outlook.¹⁴ As far as Vijaya Kṛṣṇa was concerned, Bipincandra valued the fact that the guru held progressive views regarding caste and ritual. Above all, he was grateful to the guru for initiating him in mantra yoga. Previously Bipincandra had gained an intellectual understanding of man's immortality. Through Vijaya Kṛṣṇa he attained what to him seemed empirical evidence of the fact that man was indestructible spirit; there was thus no reason to fear death.¹⁵

13. Bipincandra Pāl, *Saint Bijayakrishna Goswami* (Calcutta, 1964), pp. 29-33.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5; 70-78; Bipincandra Pāl, *Bengal Vaishnavism*, 2nd ed., (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 9-11.

15. *Saint Bijayakrishna Goswami*, pp. 98-99.

While Bipincandra revered his guru, at no time did he unconditionally surrender to him. The traditional guru-disciple relationship was unacceptable to him who valued so highly independence of mind and proudly styled himself a "born rebel."¹⁶ Although he was unwilling to be a traditional disciple, he drastically changed his way of living, following his initiation. He devoted a larger portion of his day to spiritual activities, such as reading sacred writings. He strictly regulated his diet and practised *ahimsā*.¹⁷

The change in Bipincandra's views affected his attitude towards image veneration. Under Brāhmo influence, he had rejected the use of images as idolatrous. He now concluded that images were material approximations of spiritual entities which the advanced yogis perceived during meditation. The existence of these entities did not negate the oneness of the creation. They were various aspects of the One, as was the Holy Trinity in Christianity.¹⁸ It seems worth mentioning that during his stay in England and the United States, Bipincandra discovered that he was better equipped to understand the concept of the Christian Trinity—one in *ousia*, different in *hypostatis*—than many representatives of the Christian clergy for whom it was an inexplicable mystery.¹⁹

Bipincandra's sympathetic view of image veneration and his acceptance of the Trinity signifies a decisive turning away from rationalism and distinguishes him clearly from Rājā Rāmmōhan Roy and Dēbendranāth Tagore, the pioneers of the Brāhmo movement.

Roy and Tagore had tried to base their reforms on the Upanisads alone and had rejected the *Purāṇas* as medieval. Bipincandra greatly valued the *Upanisads* but he contended that the *Purāṇas* and not the *Upanisads* constituted the highest stage in the evolution of Hinduism. In his *Introduction to the Study of Hinduism*, Bipin-

16. Bipincandra Pāl, *Mrs. Annie Besant* (Madras, 1917), p. 14.

17. *Saint Bijayakrishna Goswami*, pp. 100-106.

18. *The Soul of India*, pp. 192-202.

19. Bipincandra Pāl, *Mārkine Cārtmāsa* (Calcutta, 1945) pp. 66-67.

candra, employing Hegelian dialectic, posits three stages in the evolution of Hinduism: (1) The perceptive stage—time of the Vedas (thesis): in this phase cognition is based on sense perception: "The Deity here is not really an invisible, supersensuous Being but are [sic] all visible and 'sensible' gods and goddesses..."²⁰ (2) The reflective stage—time of the *Upanisads* (antithesis): Man has risen above sense perception to the realization of the *transcendental plane* (the formless unseen). (3) The imaginative or idealistic stage—time of *Purāṇas* (synthesis): by means of imagination man has given concrete shape to the unseen, transcendental.²¹ Bipincandra uses the fact that the use of images is normally associated with the *Purāṇic* age and not with the time of the *Upanisads* as an additional argument in defense of image veneration. In summary, he concludes that the *Purāṇas* have successfully reconciled the relative with the absolute, the seen with the unseen. Undoubtedly his Vaiṣṇava background influenced his attitude towards the *Purāṇas*. After all, it was in the *Purāṇic* age that the Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā concept crystallized. And Bipincandra contends that the Brahman of the *Upanisads* is inferior Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā. Brahman constitutes undifferentiated impersonal ultimate reality, whereas Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā are self-differentiated personal ultimate reality. It is through Rādhā, the embodiment of Love, that Kṛṣṇa realizes "His Own Personality":²² "Their mutual relation is one of inconceivable difference in identity and identity in difference."²³ Bipincandra's insistence on the superiority of the *Purāṇic* concept of the absolute over that of the *Upanisads* is clearly based on his fear that unqualified monism inevitably

20. Bipincandra Pāl, *An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism*, 2nd ed., (Calcutta, 1951), p. 99.

21. Bipincandra defends the use of imagination:

All our generalizations are really the children of Imagination. Scientific laws are not apprehended by the senses nor are they capable of any "sensible" or sensuous verification. The senses apprehend only particulars of our experience; it is the function of the imaginative faculty to peer beyond these particulars and discover the general or universal truths or principles underlying them. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

22. *Soul of India*, pp. 115-117.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-99.

results in an other-wordly attitude and thus keeps man from playing an active part in this world.

The defense of the *Purāṇas* in no way implies that Bipincandra has turned reactionary. On the contrary, he consistently opposed reactionary movements. He was especially concerned that the religious revival that was overtaking India might assume extreme dimensions. He personally favoured a middle ground between modernity and tradition. The best elements of modernity ought to be combined with the most valuable heritage of the past. While he praised the progressive outlook of the Ārya Samāj, he was dismayed by its intolerance and its narrow-minded insistence upon Vedic infallibility.²⁴

Bipincandra supported modern education which ought to include science and technology. He willingly recognized the fact that English education had made positive contributions to the freedom movement in India. At the same time he criticized the English educational system for its failure to make subject matter relevant to Indians. Of what use was a knowledge of the British fauna or flora to Indian students?²⁵ A modern Indian educational system must foster a spirit of patriotism. But patriotism alone was insufficient. He felt strongly that modern ideas, such as liberty, equality and fraternity must be the underpinning of an independent India. Upon attaining *swarāj*, India ought to be governed on a truly democratic basis, which must include provisions for initiative, recall and referendum.²⁶ In view of his suspicion of the traditional guru-disciple relationship, it is not surprising that he was particularly concerned about the possibility that Gandhiji might turn into a political guru whom the Indian people would blindly follow,²⁷ and

24. *Memories of My Life and Times*, II, 71-74.

25. *Bengal Provincial Conference, Barisal—1921 Presidential Address by Bipincandra Pāl* (Calcutta, 1291), pp. 38-41.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 63-64.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22; Bipincandra Pāl's Letter to Pandit Motilal Nehru, September 10, 1920 (a copy of this letter has been transmitted to me by Prafulla Mitra, a personal friend of Pāl).

his opposition to the Mahatma is partially based on such considerations. A staunch advocate of individual freedom, Bipincandra, however, clearly stated that freedom must not be confused with licence, and the defence of individual rights must not lead to the unbridled individualism of the West. The traditional Hindu emphasis on duty ought to be retained.²⁸

Bipincandra was not only opposed to modern man's selfish pursuit of his individual goals, he was also apprehensive about the dangers lurking in modern nationalism. Independence must be coupled with inter-dependence, he contended. In this age of shrinking distances, ruthless competition among the nations was suicidal. He, therefore, pleaded for a world-federation. Competition was a slogan of the past. It had to be replaced by cooperation.²⁹ And cooperation must go beyond the realm of politics and economics. Bipincandra was convinced that the Hindu vision of an ultimate unity underlying all diversity was an essential basis for human co-operation. After all, were not all nations particular aspects of the One reality? Was it not the Hindu synthesizing genius that had led him to the scheme of world federation just as it had led India's eminent scientist, Sir Jagadīscandra Bose to detect the unity of the organic and unorganic world? Yoga, the science which could cope with man's inner nature and with the transcendent reality, was most appropriate for this modern age. And had not India's sages proclaimed that it was man's foremost purpose to unfold his latent divinity?³⁰ Seeing the divine potential in man was decidedly a more noble view than that of the modern social scientists who regarded man as the hapless product of his environment. Thus Bipincandra's personal solution of combining a modern way of life with Hindu spirituality seemed universally applicable. By offering India's spiritual riches to the world while accepting the best of the

28. P. D. Saggi, *Life and World of Lal, Bal and Pal* (New Delhi, 1962), p. 268.

29. Bipincandra Pál, *Responsible Government* (Calcutta, 1917), p. 33; *Speeches of Sri Bepin Chandra Pal, delivered at Madras* (Madras, 1907), pp. 118-19.

30. Saggi, pp. 261-69.

West, Bipincandra had arrived at a similar solution as had been suggested by Swāmi Vivēkānanda and Śrī Aurobindo Ghōse. Alas, the proposed synthesis still awaits implementation on a more than individual basis, both in the East and in the West.

The Indian Mutiny-Cum-Revolt of 1857 and Trinidad (West Indies)

BY

J. C. JHA

The year 1857 was indeed a turning-point in the history of British India and in some respects of the British West Indies; both the regions faced a crisis and both entered a new era soon after. It is the purpose of this paper to focus attention on the impact of the Indian Mutiny-cum-Revolt of 1857¹ on the development of Trinidad.

Early in 1856 the Government and the planters of Trinidad and British Guiana showed great anxiety over the 'unfavourable opinion' expressed by the Emigration Agent at Calcutta, T. Caird, regarding 'the future supply of coolie labour'.² A memorial of the Reform Association of Trinidad said, "Without a steady stream of Indian Immigration this colony could not long continue its present exports, and this was threatened to be impeded...."³ New efforts were made to make Indian labourers in this country happy: the proposal of Dr. H. Mitchell, Agent General of Immigrants in Trinidad, concerning the education and industrial training of the children of Indian immigrants was accepted by the London authorities, and Caird was directed to arrange a 'comfortable' voyage for the Indian teachers and their families from Calcutta to Port-of-Spain.⁴

1. *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 8 June 1857, said that 'the crisis in Indian affairs' was sufficiently momentous.

2. Public Record Office, London, C.D. 295/191, p. 176.

3. C.D. 295/190, p. 315, Immigration was 'no longer defrayed from the general revenues; it was made 'self-supporting by means of a tax on indentures paid by the planters, and a duty on rum. At this moment there was 'at the credit of this fund £36,000 and yet only one vessel with Indian immigrants had arrived during this year so far.

4. C.O. 295/193, pp. 3389-339; also see *P.O.S. Gazette*, 4, April 1857; for further inducements see *P.O.S. Gazette*, 21 September 1857.

By 1857 it was felt that the salvation of Trinidad economy lay in getting as many Indians to work on the plantations as possible. Steps to get free labourers from other regions like Africa had failed and between 1852 and 1857 only a few slave ships could be captured, yielding only a few emigrants for Jamaica and British Guiana, but none for Trinidad.⁵ Besides, out of about 20,000 African labourers introduced into Trinidad at the state expense since the emancipation of slaves only about 6,000 could be readily available for work in 1857 and of the emancipated slaves and their descendants three-fourths contributed 'little to the production of the colony'.⁶ This happened at a time when the 'unequalled fertility' of the soil of Trinidad and its easy clearing and cultivation were obvious phenomena in Naparima and Couva districts and the exploitation of 'a tract of undulating land' of about thirty miles—by forty—, 'all capable of cultivation' on the eastern coast⁷ and a large portion of the northern bank of the Caroni river was urgently needed.

Naturally enough, Indian immigration became the most vital problem of Trinidad by 1857: the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* called it 'our great immigration question'.⁸ Between 31 May 1845 and 30 June 1857, 11,458 Indians had been brought to this country and not only 'the increased production' of the colony since emancipation but 'its very existence, social and political' was attributed to this Indian immigration.⁹ The immigration report of Trinidad for 1856 had noted that there was 'preference for Hindoo labour' because they gave 'unalloyed satisfaction to their employers'; they were laborious and dependable.¹⁰

Serious efforts were therefore made in 1857 to get as many Indians as possible. The Trinidad newspaper, the *Port-of-Spain*

5. C.O. 318/220, *Memorandum*, 4, December 1858.

6. C.O. 25/195, Also see *Papers relating to the West India Colonies and Mauritius* (henceforth referred to as *Papers*), 1859, Part 1, p. 311.

7. C.O. 295/195. The lower grounds of Trinidad, it was asserted by the Immigration Committee of Trinidad, could produce more than Great Britain consumed.

8. 28, October 1857.

9. *Papers*, p. 311.

10. C.O. 295/195, p. 408.

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Gazette, expressed disgust at the Immigration Agent, Thompson, at Madras being 'outmanoeuvred by a Mauritius planter' as also at the baseless rumours being circulated in India to prevent Indians from going to Trinidad at a time when planters were 'looking so impatiently for a full supply of labour [sic]'.¹¹ The Council of the Government of Trinidad resolved on 9 January that "with a view to encourage immigration from India it is expedient that the immigration agents in India be authorised to pay by way of free gift to each adult coolie immigrating to Trinidad, a bounty of five rupees, and also to advance to him a further sum not exceeding ten rupees to be repaid from the wages of such a coolie".¹² Eventually on 2 June, Ordinance No. 9 of 1857 was passed with 'the hope of an increased immigration of labourers' from the British possessions in India,¹³ and steps were taken to prevent mortality on the emigrant ships.¹⁴ Trinidad also wanted to nominate its own agents at the ports of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay so that they could work 'specially and exclusively in the interests of this island'.¹⁵ There was also a talk of getting Indian labourers in private vessels and at private expense.¹⁶

It was at this juncture that the news of the great rising in India came to Trinidad—a real bolt from the blue. The Trinidad newspapers published day to day details of the Indian crisis. The *Port-of-Spain Gazette* and the *Trinidad Sentinel* printed the dramatic stories of the outbreaks in the different areas of India and despatches from London on the latest developments were regularly published. Speculations were made on the safety of the British dominion in India as well as on the developments in the North Indian cities. When the news of the rising in Meerut and Delhi of May 1857 reached Trinidad the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* printed the

11. P.O.S. *Gazette*, 24 Jan. 1857. One of the rumours was that the arms and legs of immigrants to Trinidad would be chopped off.

12. C.O. 295/194, p. 31. According to the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* of 24 January 1857, this was an imitation of what the French had been doing in their Indian enclave of Pondicherry to get more and more emigrants.

13. C.O. 295/195, p. 408.

14. P.O.S. *Gazette*, 28 March, 20 May, 24 Oct. and 13 Nov. 1857.

15. *Papers*, p. 312.

16. *Ibid.*

views of London Press, expressing surprise at its suddenness and noted the uncalled for complacency and optimism of Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India from 1848 to 1856.¹⁷ It also quoted sharp criticisms of the acts of Governor-General Canning and his Council.¹⁸ The atrocities committed by the rebels on the Europeans—even women and children—for example, at Cawnpore (Kanpur) — were publicised in the Trinidad newspapers¹⁹ and appeals for contributions to the Indian Relief Fund²⁰ as well as for the observance of purifactory fast were issued.

The *Port-of-Spain Gazette* of 26 August extensively quoted the seditious proclamation from Delhi, calling upon 'all the Hindoos and Mahomedans' at Delhi and Meerut to rise in the name of the Mughal Emperor of Delhi against the 'Christianising measures' of the Europeans, like using the 'swine and beef-fat' in the cartridges. The places worst affected and mentioned in the '*Overland Bombay Times*' of 1 July 1857²¹ were Allahabad, Delhi, Meerut, Ferozepore, Aligarh, Lucknow, Banaras, Hansi, Hissar, Jhansi, Jullundhar, Azamgarh, Fategarh, Jaunpore, Bereilly, Shahjahanpur and Aurangabad. Also the accounts of both civil and military risings in Arrah, Patna and Danapur in Bihar²² and the widespread unrest in Central India and Bombay and the signs of disaffection in Madras, Rajasthan, Panjab and Peshawar were printed in the Trinidad press.²³ The idea of exemplary punishments to

17. P.O.S. Gazette, 24 October 1857: his famous remark, "the condition of the Sepoy left nothing to be desired" proved incorrect.

18. P.O.S. Gazette, 7 Nov. 1857. Also see *Trinidad Sentinel*, 13 Nov. 1857. John Peter Grant, who was appointed to pacify the North West Provinces was also bitterly criticised: See *Sentinel*, 10 Dec. 1857 and Edward Thompson & G.T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, new edition, Allahabad, 1958, p. 411.

19. Vide P.O.S. Gazette, 25 July, 7, Sept., 24 Oct., 9, Dec., 1857 and 20 Jan. 1858.

20. P.O.S. Gazette, 9 Dec. and 23 Dec. 1857. Also see *Sentinel* 24 Oct. 10 Nov. and 10 Dec. 1857.

21. P.O.S. Gazette, 26 Aug. 1857.

22. *Ibid.*, 10 Sept. and 26 Sept. 1857 and 17 Apl. 1858; *Trinidad Sentinel*, 26 Nov. 1857.

23. *Trinidad Sentinel*, 27 Aug. and 10 Sep. 1857; P.O.S. Gazette, 26 Aug. 1857.

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the rebels suggested in some London newspapers was supported by at least one Trinidad newspaper²⁴ Even the news of summary trial and hanging or blowing on the guns of the captured rebels found a place in the press. The failure of the British troops to capture Delhi was looked upon with dismay and the capture of the last Mughal emperor and his family was described with a sense of relief in the Trinidad press.²⁵ The *Sentinel* of 26 November 1857 mentioned Delhi as 'that sacred shrine towards which the mutineer sepoy devoutly turned his gaze, that rallying point of disaffection' and on 10 December noted the loss of 61 officers and 1,178 men on the British side in the recapture of the city.

The *Port-of-Spain Gazette* of 24 October 1857 went to the length of suggesting readings 'for a right appreciation of the Great Mutiny in the Bengal Presidency': atlas, encyclopaedia and historical geographies. On the other hand, the *Trinidad Sentinel* of 13 November 1857 printed extracts from the supplement to the *Fort St. George (Madras Gazette* of 17 July a 'loyal address of Hindoo and Mahomedan inhabitants of Madras' signed by some hundred people to the Governor, George Francis Robert, the third Lord Harris, who had been the Governor of Trinidad from 1848 to 1854.²⁶

As for Indian emigration to Trinidad, the news of the rebellion at first caused dismay in the mind of the planters and the emigration authorities in Calcutta, London and Port-of-Spain. The Emigration Agent at Calcutta reported on 21 September 1857 that his recruiting operations on behalf of the West Indies were "greatly

24. *Sentinel*, 30 July and 10 Sept. 1857.

25. *P.O.S. Gazette*, 24 Oct., 10 Nov. and 25 Nov. 1857.

26. K. N. Bell and W. P. Morrell (ed.), *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy, 1830-1860*, Oxford reprint, 1968, p. 428, f.n.: Harris was married to a daughter of the Archdeacon of Trinidad, and 'was sometimes accused of undue partiality towards the planters'. Possibly he had been instrumental in reviving Indian Immigration to Trinidad in 1851. Also perhaps an emigration depot was established in Madras and emigration from that port was resumed after a lapse of ten years with his goodwill in 1857. While eulogising the great work of Harris in the field of educational development in Trinidad the Attorney General of this country said in August 1857 that like other British administrators in India, he would be 'in the midst of all the anxieties created by the Mutiny: see *Papers*, p. 313.

impeded in consequence of the disturbed state of the Upper Provinces [Bihar and Uttar Pradesh]"²⁷ H. Labouchere informed the Governor of Trinidad, R. Keate, that "the disturbances in India, which have hitherto seriously retarded emigration, leave little hope that the Emigration agents would be able to send out anything to the number which has been ordered"²⁸ and the latter reported that the 'present disturbed state of India has produced an uneasy feeling with regard to the immigration during this season'.²⁹ But soon it was realised that the Indian Rebellion could prove a boon to the Trinidad plantations and the crisis on the labour front in Trinidad could be averted as a result of this rebellion.

One of the reasons for this optimism was the possibility of getting a large number of people out of work because of the disturbance. Keate reported in December 1857 that private intelligence indicated that "in consequence of the troubles in the North of India and the drain on the finances of the country resulting therefrom, all public works have been brought to a standstill" and consequently he imagined that there would be no want of persons ready to emigrate" from Madras.³⁰ But the demand for labour was so great that the Trinidad Legislative Council on 15 December expressed fear that due to the disturbed conditions of North India they would not get more than 3,000 persons in 1858.³¹

Meanwhile even before the rebellion was suppressed and India 'reconquered', speculations began in Indian, British and Trinidad press on the fate of the captured rebel soldiers. One 'Indophilus' in the *Times* suggested that they could be sent to the West Indies—a fate "intolerable to them, though their company, we imagine, would be still more intolerable to the West Indians".³² Around

27. C.O. 318/219, p. 441.

28. *Papers*, p. 382. Also C.O. 295/196: Henry Labouchere (later Lord Taunton) was Secretary of State for the Colonies from Nov. 1855 to Feb. 1868: Sell and Morrel (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 122, f.n.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 324. Also C.O. 295/196.

30. C.O. 295/196.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Vide *P.O.S. Gazette*, 24 Oct. 1857.

the same time, the West India Committee in London wrote that on the termination of the Indian struggle and the re-establishment of the British Supremacy, the rebel soldiers could be transported for life to the distant land of the West Indies where they could be divided into small groups and utilised as labourers.³³ The Committee said that a preliminary discussion between the leading Directors of the English East India Company and the prominent West Indian planters and well wishers of the West Indies revealed that there was 'a general desire' for trying this experiment, even though there was some risk involved in it. An Act of the British Parliament, it was suggested, should authorise this transportation, the East India Company should bear its cost and the West Indies might meet the expense of reception, employment and control of the exiles. They could as well be allowed to bring their families at the cost of the colonial funds to earn their wages as free labourers; those who were found 'refractory and unmanageable' might be employed on Government work in penal gangs.³⁴ Only two things would distinguish them from the free emigrants: the deductions from their wages and their inability to return.

Similar proposals of the Standing Committee of the Trinidad Council of Immigration were sent to the Board of Land and Emigration in London who on 23 December 1857 forwarded them to the Commissioner for the affairs of India (Board of Control). The Committee thought that additional soldiers and police would be needed for keeping a proper watch on the convict soldiers for whom barracks could be made at St. Joseph and Naparima and the cost might be met from the indenture fees charged on the latter: at the end of indenture an annual fee of two pounds might be charged. An ordinance would be needed to prevent the exiles from getting firearms and gun-powder which would be deposited in the same custody of the Government.

Ten thousand of such convicts, the Committee said, might be brought to Trinidad annually for several years³⁵ because very soon

33. *Ibid.*, 30 Dec. 1857: The memorial was submitted on 16 October 1857.

34. *Ibid.* Also see C.O. 295/196.

35. C.O. 295/196, pp. 384-85. Later in June 1858 a request was made by some people of the valleys of St. Mary (Jamaica) to the Governor of that island that a portion of these mutineer sepoys should be sent there.

the building of railroad, the cultivation of new and fertile lands, and possibly the asphalt and other mines³⁶ would absorb them. If the British Government was willing to get a guaranteed loan for Trinidad 'all persons sentenced to deportation' could be sent to Trinidad even within a limited time.³⁷

The Governor of Trinidad, while generally agreeing with these suggestions, emphasized the necessity of removing all semblance of compulsion and penal labour camp, lest the normal Indian immigration might be adversely affected. "The cost of deportation, he thought, should not be charged on the convicts for this would put them in a different category from the normal indentured Indian labourers and bring in an element of dissatisfaction. The ex-soldiers might be indentured to agricultural farms for ten years,³⁸ but the Governor could transfer their services or cancel their indentures. Their services could as well be assigned to the Government rather than to the individual estates and like other Indian labourers, they could be permitted to purchase their time.

By early 1858 these proposals were discussed several times in the columns of the Trinidad press. The *Sentinel* of 17 December 1857 saw an evidence of 'madness' and 'cupidity' in this 'much talked of matter of sepoy [soldier] immigration' and opposed 'the plan of foisting upon us the rebels from India' even though at the cost of the East India Company. Unlike the low-caste Indian labourers who had so far been satisfied in Trinidad, it pointed out, a 'Brahmin sepoy' would foster discontent among the immigrants and this would eventually prove to be 'a dearer bargain'.³⁹

36. Around this time there was a possibility of discovering coal, iron, gold, etc., in Trinidad.

37. C.O. 295/196: About £50,000 would be needed every six months for deporting 10,000 convicts.

38. Under the Immigration Ordinance No. 24 of 1854 the indentured Indian labourer had to stay for ten years in Trinidad before getting a return passage, but in the case of the soldiers the question of return should not arise.

39. One 'Philos' wrote in the *Sentinel* of 18 Feb. 1858 that the 'tens of thousands of semi-friends from the charnel house of Bengal, even though alleged to be high-caste men, would not behave better than the low-caste ones, who some time back attempted to murder their Manager for refusing

The *Gazette* of 27 January 1858 quoted from the *Times* the view of 'Indophilus' that the soldier exiles might come in contact with their countrymen in the West Indies and effect their escape. Yet another view expressed here was that the soldiers could be first brought to Barbados and then permanently employed in different parts of the West Indies with a climate similar to India. Far removed from 'their idolatrous temples, their priests and heathen practices',⁴⁰ they would exploit the 'inexhaustible resources in fertile soil', atone for their offences and could become Christians and good citizens in due course.

On 17 April 1858 the *Gazette* quoted from *Bengal Hurkaru* or *Hircarrah*⁴¹ of Calcutta rumours regarding the deportation of the Indian rebels to the Andaman islands in the Bay of Bengal where they would die a slow death and called it a design of the Indian Government to select . . . [a] less distant position as a penal settlement' when the West Indies had been willing to take them. The *Gazette* pleaded that even though the proposal of the West Indies smacked of self-interest' it should have been presented in a clear way in the British Parliament: the West Indian Governments, the planters in England and the West India Association

them permission to travel: "If those who act thus came from the Feet of Brahma, what may be expect from those who proceeded from his mouth!" 'philos' was obviously referring to the ancient Hindu theory of the *Puru-shasukta* on the origin of *chaturvarnya* (four orders): "When they divided the primeval being (Purusha), the Brahman was his mouth, the Rajanya (Kahatriya) became his arms, the Vaishya was his thighs, and from his feet sprang the Shudra." At one time in Bengal the British recruited only the "largest, handsomest, and cleverest-looking men, who are undoubtedly the high castes": quoted in Stephen P. Cohan, 'The Untouchable Soldier: Caste, Politics, and the Indian Army', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, May 1969. Of the untouchables, Chamars and Mahars of Western India were recruited in large numbers before the Mutiny, but after this event their recruitment stopped. That is one reason why large numbers of them emigrated to Trinidad.

40. How off the mark and what a prophecy!

41. This newspaper, founded in 1793, had a circulation in 1828 of 155 daily average and 1,000 weekly and it was one of the main defenders of Indian emigrants: I. M. Cumpston, *Indians Overseas in British Territories* (1834-1864), London, 1953, p. 5, fn. 5. The India Office Library in the Commonwealth Relations Office, London, has a full collection of this newspaper.

would not in any case carry so much weight as the 'clearly expressed wish of the people' of the West Indies in favour of bringing the banished Indian soldiers to their territories.

Nothing came out of these pleadings because of certain significant developments on the British Indian scene: the termination of the East India Company's Government, the taking over of the Indian administration by the British Crown through the Government of India Act of 1858 which created the office of the Secretary of State for India with a Council of India as the highest policy-making body in place of the Court of Directors and the Board of Control; Queen Victoria's proclamation of amnesty to those Indians who were not involved in serious crimes; and the clemency shown by Governor-General Canning.⁴² On new 'political considerations the British Government decided not to deport the convicted sepoys to the West Indies.⁴³ Looking back at this decision and considering the fate of some of these unfortunate sepoys in the Andamans,⁴⁴ one can say that their deportation to Trinidad would have been better at least from the humanitarian point of view.

All the same, some of the rebel sepoys and civilians did trickle into Trinidad. In fact, the Indian Revolt of 1857 did for Trinidad what all other inducements would have failed to do; the trickle of Indian immigrants became a stream. While only 673 Indians had emigrated to Trinidad from Calcutta in 1854, 290 in 1855 and 608 in 1856, now in 1857 came 1,374; in 1858 Calcutta yielded 1,638 and Madras 379; in 1859, 3,288 came (1,867 from Calcutta and 1,421 from Madras); in 1860 came 2,160 (1,327 from Calcutta and 833 from Madras); and in 1861 came 2,541 (2,306

42. *The P.O.S. Gazette* of 26 January 1859 called the year 'a memorable year for India!'

43. C.O. 318/220, p. 13.

44. D. W. D. Comins, *Note on Emigration from India to Trinidad, Cal.*, 1893, p. 24. In 1858 the number of Indians emigrating to Mauritius was 29,948; British Parliamentary Papers, *Emigration*, No. 14, Sessions 1859-61, Appendix No. 19. For the first time Grenada received about 1,000 Indians in 1857-59; St. Lucia 555 in 1859 and 660 in 1860; St. Vincent received 700 in 1860 and 1861. See W. P. Morrell (ed.), *British Colonial Policy in the Mid-Victorian Age* Oxford 1969 p. 459.

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from Calcutta and 235 from Madras. By 1861 the Indians formed 15.9 per cent (13,488) of the population of 84,438.⁴⁵

During 1858-59 there was a sense of relief at the prospect of getting more and more Indians for the West Indies. The London Emigration Office reported on 9 December 1858 that Trinidad would now get 'a considerable number of emigrants in excess of the number ordered (3,000)' ⁴⁶ and the Trinidad Legislative Council in February 1859 took note of it.

Later Richard Temple in his minute of 14 September 1875 noted that the highest total figure ever reached by emigration from Calcutta was 27,779 in 1858 and in only one other year it was more than 25,000.⁴⁷ The Government of India in one of their despatches of 3 May 1877 corroborated this: "the largest number of emigrants that ever sailed from Calcutta was in 1858, immediately after the Mutiny; and it has been conjectured that the two circumstances were not without connexion; next to that year came the following one, 1859, when 25,337 persons left the Hooghly [Calcutta]".⁴⁸ Even the periods of famine and scarcity conditions did not lead to such an exodus: in 1860 and 1861, when the North-Western Provinces [Agra] were in the grips of famine, only 17,899 and 22,600, respectively, were recruited; and in 1865-66 when Orissa and Bihar were suffering from a terrible famine and scarcity conditions prevailed in Oudh and the eastern parts of the North-Western Provinces 24,571 and 20,109, respectively emigrated.

Uttar Pradesh, Western Bihar and Northern Madhya Pradesh were the worst affected areas during the stormy days of 1857-59. A great destruction of life and property took place during the risings and in the course of their suppression, all agricultural and commercial activities were stopped. The orgy of mutual slaughter in which even innocent lives were lost, and the fake trials and consequent hangings at the nearest trees left no other choice for

45. Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, London, 1968, p. 158: all estates except one indented for Indian labourers in 1857.

46. C.O. 318/220, p. 352. Also *P.O.S. Gazette*, 5 February 1859.

47. Vide, *Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates* (Sanderson Committee report), London, 1910, p. 8.

48. *Ibid.*

many people than to flee the country. The mopping-up operations were held not only in the urban areas but also in the countryside. Walled cities were stormed in the fashion of the irregular wars of the Middle Ages rather than in the way regular wars were fought in the nineteenth century. In the Oudh area alone more than 100,000 men were under arms apart from the rebel sepoys and over 1,500 forts were demolished.⁴⁹ The districts of Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bulandshahr and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh were 'scenes of utter anarchy and confusion' during this period when 'villages had arisen against villages, Hindoo against Muhammoden, debtor against creditor' and "lawlessness and plunder had run riot over these tracts, and the authority of the British Government had been for months suspended".⁵⁰ Eventually, "great and signal retribution fell upon them. Large properties were confiscated, towns laid waste, rebels actively hunted up, heavy fines inflicted. Villagers fled for fear of vengeance. Land fell out of cultivation. Arrears of collection of land revenue, suspended during the mutinies, hung heavily over the heads of the people. The excitement of the time of disturbance (*alam-i-bulma*) was followed by a period of reaction and of torpor."⁵¹ The famine, epidemics and the hostile attitude of most of the British officials ruined the peasants completely and they availed of every opportunity of escape.

In the light of this ruinous state of affairs, it is no surprise to find Caird at Calcutta writing on 31 October 1857 that the labourers with their families came walking sometimes forty days to Calcutta depot, mostly from the districts of Banaras, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur, Jaunpur, Ghazipur—all in Uttar Pradesh—and Muzaffarpur, Saran with headquarters at Chapra, Shahabad with headquarters at Arrah, Patna, Gaya, Chota-Nagpur and Hazaribagh in Bihar⁵²—the most disturbed pockets of North India. The map of

49. L. S. S. O'Malley (ed.), *Modern India and the West*, London, 1941, p. 56. The P.O.S., *Gazette* of 20 February 1856 and 26 September 1857 described the fate of this area 'newly brought under British rule' (in 1856).

50. Vide B. B. Misra, *Administrative History of India, 1834-1947*, Bombay 1970, p. 439.

51. Report of Auckland Colvin, quoted, *ibid.*...

52. *Papers*, p. 450. The author of this paper has met many aged people in Trinidad who come from these districts and they still speak Amedhi or

North-Western and Central India provided in S. N. Sen's book, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Calcutta, 1958 (reprint)), when compared to the map Judith Ann Weller's *The East Indian Indenture in Trinidad* (Puerto Rico, 1968), makes it clear that the vast majority of the indentured emigrants came from areas worst affected by the turmoil of 1857-58 and Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Azamgarh, Faizabad, Ghazipur, Basti, Balia, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Jaunpur, Sultanpur and Mizapur in Uttar Pradesh and Arrah, Chapra, Patna, Gaya and Hazaribagh in Bihar contributed most to Mutiny as well as to emigration to Trinidad through the port of Calcutta. Geoghegan's *Report on Coolie Emigration* says that up to 1871, 36,413⁵³ Indians emigrated to Trinidad from these areas via the port of Calcutta of which 8,396 (21.9 per cent) were from West Bengal, 1,305 (3.6 per cent) from Central Bengal, 11,278 (29.3 per cent) from Bihar, 16,027 (41.7 per cent) from the North-West Provinces (Agra), Oudh and Central India. Temple in the above-mentioned report of 1875 naturally said that the North-West Provinces, Oudh and Bihar were 'the fields' from which the emigrants were chiefly drawn.⁵⁴

The Bengal native army consisted mostly of recruits from Oudh and Bhojpur and most of them were of high castes—Brahman and Kshatriya. Now that this army was disbanded and the recruitment of Bhojpuris stopped as a result of their part in the Mutiny, many of them had to emigrate to foreign countries. For fear of being arrested and charged on suspicion of complicity in the rebellion, many gave wrong information regarding name, address and caste. The Register of the ship "Ellenborough" of 1858 kept in the Warden's Office, Hart Street, Port-of-Spain, does not mention the *zila* (administrative division), *pargana* (revenue divi-

Bhojpuri dialects of Hindi. Indian place names in Trinidad connected with the cities of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and names of persons connected with Rama and Krishna are further evidence of their connection with these parts of India.

53. According to *Sanderson Report*, p. 5, in Trinidad there were 103,000 Indians in 1887 and between 1845 and 1871 Calcutta, Bombay and Madras ports contributed 42,519 emigrants.

54. *Sanderson Report*, p. 8.

sion) and the village, not even the names of relatives of the emigrants.⁵⁵ Also, of 191 immigrants in 1859-60, brought by "Bruce", 108 are recorded only as Tamil (of Madras or Tamilnadu) and Telugu (of Andhra Pradesh) speaking, one as Zamindar and another as just a Hindu, and their caste and other details are left out.⁵⁶

Underhill, a Christian missionary, spoke to the people from Bihar, the North-west Province, Oudh and Bengal in 1859 and in Arouca (on the Eastern Main Road between Arims and Tunapuna) he 'discovered among them some rebel sepoys from India', one of them being 'a follower of Ummar [Amar] Singh of Jugdes-pore [Jegadishpur of Shahabed district near Arrah in Bihar]'.⁵⁷ Underhill says that these sepoys were 'far removed from the leanness and obsequiousness' of the Bengali ryot and their 'demeanour and plumpness of form' testified to their prosperous condition.⁵⁸ However, as soon as they learnt that Underhill knows 'those parts of India from which they came, they quickly walked off, apparently fearing that the discovery of their connection with the mutiny might in some way compromise them'.⁵⁹ Again, Charles Kingsley wrote in 1890 that some high-caste Hindu sepoys emigrated to Trinidad after the Rebellion of 1857.⁶⁰

55. J. A. Weller, *The East-Indian Indenture in Trinidad*, p. 123, f.n.2.

56. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

57. E. B. Underhill, *The West Indies, their social and religious condition* 1862. Two brothers, Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh, were the Rajput (Kshatriya) Zamindars and leaders of the rebels in Bhojpur, West Bihar. The former, 80 years old marched through Rohtas, Mirzapur, Rewa and Bande threatening British communications, tried to establish contact with the Maratha rebel leader Nana Sahib, at Cawnpore and the Begam of Oudh at Lucknow, occupied Azamgarh for some time and died of gun wounds on April 1858. See S. N. Sen., *op. cit.*, pp. 248-56. Some of the descendants of those heroes of 1857 may be found today in Arouca and other areas. Also see *Sentinel*, 13 November and 26 November 1857. One Trinidad Indian, Tesh Ramnarine Mahabir Singh's great grandfather, Echchow Singh, had been killed in action in the Indian Mutiny: M. J. Kirpalani & others (ed.), *Indian Centenary Review, Trinidad—1845-1945*, p. 147.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *At last, a Christmas in the West Indies*, London, p. 99.

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G. K. Gohale, one of the top Indian liberal leaders, who was instrumental in getting the indenture system abolished in 1917, once said in the Indian Imperial Legislative Council that the mutiny was 'a serious national disaster' and 'the cloud of distrust, suspicion, and prejudice then raised still hangs over the country.'⁶¹ Part of this 'cloud' seems to have come over to Trinidad also. Indian labourers who had so far been treated as meek, docile and trustworthy creatures by the white planters were now on occasions looked upon with suspicion. Some Trinidadians even thought that 'violence lurked just below the surface in the Indian temperament' and that they were 'living on the crust of a volcano'.⁶² Repeated discussion of atrocities committed from both sides in India in 1857-59 only increased the bitterness. In 1859 there were 'boisterous parades' during the Muharram celebrations in Port-of-Spain and a riot at St. Joseph.⁶³ Between 1859 and 1865 there were several cases of serious fighting and murder by Indians, and these were treated as an aftermath of the mutiny.⁶⁴

The Indian Mutiny-cum-Revolt of 1857 indeed accelerated the process of Indian emigration and brought a new dimension into the relationship between the planters and the indentured Indian labourers in Trinidad. Since the emotions were at 'a high pitch' during the post-mutiny period, every little incident among the Indians in Trinidad was connected with the frenzy of the mutiny. Sweeping remarks were made about the temperament of the Indians in general and too much was read in the increase in the case of 'ferocious onslaughts with their cutlass', 'steeped in barbaric darkness' and 'like the monster in Frankenstein', said the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* of 18 January 1865, the Indian portion of Trinidad population might acquire 'a vitality and strength', carrying it beyond control, and 'hurl it headlong on the community that has matured it'. Even the agitation for an increase of wages among Indians

61. R. P. Patwardhan & D. V. Ambekar (ed.), *The Speeches and writings of G. K. Gokhale*, Poona, 1962, p. 472.

62. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 154; C.O. 295/204 and P.O.S. *Gazette*, 18 August 1860.

63. P.O.S. *Gazette*, 13 July 1859.

64. Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-54.



was interpreted as sedition. A letter to the editor of the *Gazette*⁶⁵ asserted that there might not be obviously a 'deep laid scheme' maturing in Trinidad, but 'can any one explain the mysterious chuputties which first appeared near Delhi and traversed the whole length and breadth of the land?' It also referred to cartridge incident and the developments at Meerut, Delhi, and other places during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and suggested the creation of a special constabulary and a Rifle Corps or Artillery for nipping the trouble in the bud. A report of the Immigration Office of Trinidad of 3 April 1856 said that the retired Mohommedan soldier or sepoy, considered inferior in domestic and social relations to every grade of Hindoo and utterly unfitted for agricultural pursuits' and anti-Christian in attitude, had not satisfied the planters, but 'the number of sepoys is fortunately as yet too scanty to admit proof of the latter'.⁶⁶

Nothing like a widespread rebellion occurred in Trinidad and the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* of 3 May allayed the fears of 'timid' sceptics by asserting that there was no disaffection among the Indians and there was no need of a special police either, asking them further "to discard the ideas of even remote danger in connexion with our Indian population' and to believe that there is not a single feature of the great military insurrection among the native troops of India in 1857 that justifies reference to it while speaking of the Coolie laborer [sic] on the Sugar Estates of Trinidad".

However, from 1882 to 1884 'strikes of a very serious nature' occurred on the estates in Naparima and El Socorro and Laurel Hill in Tacarigua.⁶⁷ The Hindus of South Trinidad were reported during this period to be fostering dissatisfaction in the Naparima districts and Regulation No. 9 of 1882 was passed by the Government of Trinidad to restrict processions during the Muharram and the Madrasī Temitarna festivals.⁶⁸ What followed in San Fer-

65. 4 Feb. 1865. Chapati is a lighter variety of roti (Indian bread). For this chapati incident of the Mutiny of 1857, see S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-401.

66. *Vide P.O.S. Gazette*, 3 May 1865.

67. Comins, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

68. *Papers on Recent Coolie Disturbances at the Mohurram Festival*, 1885, encl. I, No. 5.

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nando in 1884 as a reaction to these restrictions was a repetition of what had happened near Hyderabad (now capital of Andhra Pradesh in South India) in 1855 on the Muharram day and a reenactment of some of the scenes of the Mutiny of 1857 in North India; Hindus and Muslims combined to protest against restrictions imposed by the British Government on their religious customs and movements during festivals and in the confrontation that followed, several Indians were killed and injured.⁶⁹ The Muharram (Husain) riot of 1884 was perhaps "a demonstration of Indian nationalism in which the Hindus also took part".⁷⁰

The 'bogy'⁷¹ of the Mutiny of 1857 seems to have continued to haunt the planters and some others in Trinidad for quite some time and they kept themselves in readiness to contain any confrontation; they perhaps forgot that the atrocities had been committed in India in 1857-58 by both parties during the heat of the moment and that the shameful acts were committed on the Indian side 'either by sepoys who were maddened by religious fanaticism and stricken by terror, or by ruffians and criminals who had been let out of jails'⁷² and the common peasants, artisans and others who.

69. *Ibid.* Many Indians who had emigrated through the ports of Calcutta and Madras during the post-Mutiny period might have taken part in the confrontation of 1884. Colonel Colin Mackenzie was attacked at Solarum near Hyderabad for banning 'procession, music and noise on Mohurram Day, for which some people were punished: See S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

70. Alan Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, London, 1954, p. 679. One of the main causes of the riots, according to Norman report, was the resentment among the indentured labourers at the increase in the size of tasks (allotted works) in the preceding months: Br. pp. 1884-5, LIII, C. 4366. Also *Recent Coolie Disturbances in Trinidad*, *op. cit.*, pp. 53; 59.

71. K. A. Grant in *My Missionary Memories* (Halifax, 1923), p. 94, says that in the course of a sermon at San Fernando he emphasised the necessity of 'using and strengthening moral forces, lest on a limited scale we should be exposed to the tragedies of 1857 in India, and this was misrepresented as a threat of another mutiny in a local newspaper. Indeed, Cawnpore, as Wood says (*op. cit.*, pp. 154-55) had joined Haiti in creating a terror among whites and coloured planters and other rich men and the Trinidad Governor in 1859 even suggested the recruitment of additional black soldiers in the West India Regiment.

72. Tarachand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Delhi, Vol. II, p. 105.

by and large, emigrated to Trinidad were peace-loving people and their labour bore such a fruit that by 1861 Mitchell was boasting that with the labour force of 15,000 Indians that year, Trinidad would export about 700,000 tons of sugar, more than the expected crop of Cuba'.⁷³

73. P.O.S. Gazette, 1 March 1861.

Mass Politics and the Punjab Congress in the Pre-Gandhian Era*

BY

N. G. BARRIER

Recent studies on South Asian political history question the standard view of Congress primacy in regional affairs. This paper places the nationalist movement within the context of what was happening in one province, the Punjab, prior to 1919, and examines its weakness in developing broad-based or mass political support. The first section discusses the major concerns of Punjab politicians and shows the relevance of these elements for the Congress. The second deals with a set of incidents, the 1907 Punjab disturbances, as a case study of an attempt at mass recruitment.

The Punjab has acquired a reputation as being non-political prior to the Gandhian era, a backwater of Indian nationalism. Punjabis often accepted the assessment. In fact, the Punjab was politicized but in a fashion dissimilar to that of other provinces. Karl Deutsch has suggested that communication networks consist of two aspects relevant to political development, structure and content. In the Punjab, both reflected parochial patterns and interests. Economic and social considerations (tribe and caste) influenced emerging links among agriculturists. Urban politics tended to revolve around religious communalism. Possessing journals, finances, and instant appeal, religious organizations influenced political commitment and on occasion mobilized sections of the population. Agrarian and communal networks created the political context within which the Congress had to operate.

The communal pattern which became increasingly apparent after 1849 had its roots in the social and political structure of pre-British Punjab. Continual invasion and cultural confrontation had

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produced a society composed of three different but sometimes overlapping segments—Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh—each with its customs, boundaries, and traditional elites (landed and religious). Virtually balanced population, with the western districts primarily Muslim and the east Hindu-Sikh, these communities shared a heritage of conflict involving war, rioting, and struggle for converts.

British rule accentuated religious divisions. Ideas and institutions accompanying the *raj* stimulated a sorting out of identity and goals, with the result that each community developed revivalist and reform associations, propaganda media, schools, and related programmes. Muslims had two organizations with district branches, the Anjuman-i-Islamia and the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, newspapers, and a tract society (the Mohamedan Tract and Book Depot). The Arya Samaj had dozens of branches and between 1885 and 1905 was involved in at least fifteen journalistic enterprises. Singh Sabhas dotted the Punjab, with propaganda agencies including the Khalsa Tract Society and the Sikh Handbill Society. These facilitated communication within religious groups and spread political awareness based on assessments of history and current events.¹

Communal identity found expression in the British system which set the rules, goals, and structures for formal political activity.

The British encouraged agitation along western lines by indicating that Punjabis' wishes could affect policy and by introducing arenas of competition such as municipal elections.² Punjab religious communities responded with efforts to influence the British and control new institutions. Associations such as the Arya Samaj provided leaders and funds for political maneuvering. In addition

1. Discussion of organizations in the following: Mian Shah Din, "Mohamedan Societies in the Punjab," *The Indian Magazine*, 1898, pp. 188-90; N. G. Barrier, "Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1870-1890", *Punjab Past and Present* (forthcoming, Spring 1970); Barrier, "The Punjab Government and Communal Politics", *JAS*, 27 (1968) 363-79; Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature* (Delhi, 1970); Kenneth Jones, "Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contribution", *JAS*, 27 (1968) 39-54; Munsha Singh Dukhi, *Jivan Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid* (Amritsar, n.d.); Harbans Singh and Jagjit Singh, "Singh Sabha Lahir", in Ganda Singh (ed.), *Panjab 1849-1960* (Ludhiana, 1962).

2. The Punjab case illustrated in Barrier, "The Punjab Government".

to agitation, the organizations also were involved in politics in that they marshalled resources to determine the allocation of values, power and prestige within and outside their community.³

The gradual institutionalization of communal identity meant that religious issues tended to dominate urban activities. The western-educated elite led the new organizations, cooperating with the aristocracy in order to legitimize programmes. This involvement did not preclude alliance on a secular basis, although competition and conflict usually made cooperation temporary. Between 1882 and 1884, for example, Lahore residents held meetings over the Ilbert Bill and the Norris Court case involving Surendranath Banerjea.⁴ Religious affiliation nevertheless overrode class interest. As a prominent Sikh commented, almost every attempt to perpetuate Hindu-Muslim unity disappeared as immediate issues became less important.⁵

Moreover, spreading religious nationalism made such experiments increasingly difficult. By 1909, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims were involved in all-Punjab organizations—the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Punjab Hindu Sabha, and the Punjab Muslim League.⁶

In the last years of the century, town-based communal organizations began to harness the resources of co-religionist in the

3. On the various agitations, see "Special Branch Note on the Agitation against Cow-Killing", in GIP (GI Public), Jan. 1894, 309-414B (NAI); PGG (PG Committee), May 1886 9-12A (West Pak. Record Office); evidence and resolutions in *Report of the Public Service Commissions Punjab Evidence* (Calcutta, 1887). This broader concept of politics opens the possibility of discussion beyond the usual form of political activity associated with the period (exemplified by the definitions and approach of a recent book on Indian nationalism by Anil Seal).

4. *Tribune*, March 17, 1883, p. 2; September 15, 1883, p. 4. One product of these agitations was a "unity society" to bridge religious differences.

5. Mohan Singh Vaid, pp. 71-73.

6. On the Sikhs, see *Golden Jubilee Book, Chief Khalsa Diwan* (Amritsar, 1958), Nahar Singh (ed.), "Developments in Sikh Politics, 1900-1911", *Gurduara Gazette*, April 1969, English section, pp. 6-70; Muslim League, Muahammad Shafi memorandum, July 25, 1908, GIP, August 1908, 45B.; Hindu Sabha, noting and memorials in GIPOL (Home-Political), October 1909, 29-31A. Hindu concern over their proportionate loss in population was illustrated in essay contests on the theme, "Why are Hindus in decline?" Sikhs and Muslims voiced similar concerns, mobilizing co-religionists for census and to protect themselves in areas of conversion and language controversy.

countryside. The rampant paranoid of Punjab sects, accentuated by constitutional developments, fostered the extension of networks beyond urban centers. Believing that survival depended on its size and overall condition, each community tried to widen its membership and strengthen its position through education, improved health, and ultimately boundary maintenance (new stress on symbols, purification, and self-identity as contrasted with other Punjabis). The Arya Samaj, for example, sponsored *Shuddhi* (cleansing, conversion ceremonies) among low caste agriculturists, a tactic designed to increase the Hindu population and to weaken opponents. Arya Samaj propaganda tended to be in sanskritized Urdu, intelligible only to the most educated, but the Samaj did dispatch *prachar* or preaching teams to instruct Hindus and prevent conversion to Islam or Sikhism. The Sikhs already had limited involvement outside the cities, with the village-based Singh Sabhas reflecting the demography and lines of authority within the community.

The Sabhas produced thousands of publications, usually in simple Panjabi, and sent out preaching-singing bands for work with illiterate villagers. Delegates attended fairs and historic gurudwaras, both central spots for the dispersed and primarily agrarian Sikhs.⁷

These movements had the long-range potential of influencing agrarian alignments. They also created new channels of communication which could be tapped if necessary. In 1908-9, for example, Singh Sabhas contacted a large portion of the Sikh community and prepared monster petitions on the Anand Marriage Bill.⁸

The penetration of communal networks coincided with the emergence of another link among agriculturists, organizations articulating rural interests, Jat, Rajput, and eventually zamindar associations began to meet for conferences, discuss issues and prepare resolutions. The government provided impetus for the development by encouraging associations as a means of dealing with debt and related problems. Pro-rural sentiment, as exhibited

7. For example, the publications discussed in Barrier. *The Sikhs* and articles by Kenneth Jones and Barrier which deal with Sikh and Hindu movements (*The Indian Archives*, forthcoming, Spring 1970).

8. Background in K. S. Talwar, "The Anand Marriage Act, *Punjab Past and Present*, II (1968), 400-410.

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by the Punjab Alienation of Land Act and later by reserved seats for agriculturists, also stimulated political awareness. *Jagirdars* and other landed aristocrats led the associations with the assistance of retired officials and lawyers who purchased farm land (often in the canal colonies).⁹

In their early stages, these rural associations had no definite connection with the cities. The professional classes prominent in urban affairs generally were disinterested in organizing the masses. Their concerns and constituencies were local. To them, politics consisted of presenting "public opinion" in the form of speeches and petitions and then letting the British reach decisions. Rare attempts at united action focussed on horizontal mobilization, involving the formation of corresponding committees and coordination of meetings. Why develop new techniques and broaden a political base, especially along vertical lines? The need did not seem to exist as long as leaders of a small elite accepted a limited notion of politics involving constitutional agitation and issues touching less than one percent of the population. Some such as Lajpat Rai did claim to "represent the masses," but politicians usually lacked the empathy and skills necessary to reach beyond their own interest groups. Punjabis were not alone in this regard. Their orientation toward politics was a common one shared by most westernized elites in India. As in other provinces, politicians developed new techniques and programmes aiming at mass recruitment primarily in response to challenges to their position and claims.

The commitments and self-image of Punjab politicians also influenced their role in the Indian National Congress. The Punjab then as now boomed with activity and excitement—urban groups were creating institutions, competing, working in caste and religious organizations, founding companies, and vying for prestige. Nationalism appeared irrelevant in light of those local concerns. Only when provincial developments or outside forces affected leaders

9. The *Civil and Military Gazette* and the *Tribune* occasionally printed articles on the associations, 1880-1907. For the British attitude toward rural classes and resulting policies, Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900* (Durham, 1965). The Punjab Unionist Party tended to view the alienation act as a touchstone of their programme.

did they show enthusiasm for Indian nationalism.¹⁰ Punjabis wrote and spoke of nationalism, but almost invariably they meant the Hindu, or Sikh, or Muslim nation.¹¹ Even early in Punjab political development, religious consciousness among the western-educated elite interfered with the growth of a broader notion of nationhood.

From another perspective, the Congress tended to develop when and where specific groups championed its cause.¹² The Punjab lacked a core of politicians interested in cooperation across provincial or communal lines. The few supporters of Congress, such as Jaishi Ram, Dyal Singh, J. C. Bose, and K. P. Roy, either were Bengali or Punjabis who because of their background shared the cosmopolitan outlook of the Bengalis. Another generation of politicians appearing by the 1890's, however, shared a different orientation.¹³ Although sometimes attending sessions and working within the mildly pro-Congress Lahore Indian Association, the new men (predominately Khatri and Arora with Hindu or Arya Samaj leanings) challenged Congress goals. Lajpat Rai's references to a forthcoming session in 1901, for example, contained attacks on alleged Muslim appeasement by national leaders and a call for an all-India Hindu Congress.¹⁴ Others demanded that the Congress espouse "practical" programmes such as national education and industry, activities modelled on what *bania* politicians were talking about doing in the Punjab. Parochialism and arrogance characterized Punjabis' dealings at annual meetings. Their speeches reflected conflicting but vivid self-images—we are warlike, rustic and unpolished, but practical, honest, and most importantly, efficient.¹⁵ Although taking second place in speechmaking, Punjab delegates

10. Patterns of participation evaluated in Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics", *JAS*, 26 (1967), 363-79.

11. Such references often appear in the tracts and speeches of the period.

12. For example, the Chitpavan Brahmans in Maharashtra or Kayasthas in the United Provinces.

13. Biographical information in Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress".

14. Lajpat Rai, "The Coming Indian National Congress," *Kayastha Samachar*, IV (1901), 376-85.

15. Letters and articles in *Tribune*, December 1900, and April 1903. Also, Lajpat Rai, "The Coming Congress". For the Congress leadership's response, see Dinshaw Wacha to Pherozeshah Mehta, February 2, 1889, Mehta Papers (filmed copy, NAI), Wacha to Dadabhai Naoroji, December 19, 1903, Naoroji Papers (NAI).

wheeled and dealed behind the scenes in much the same fashion they did at home. They took pride in their huffy, periodic withdrawals from Congress circles.

II

Between 1904 and 1907, Punjab politicians renewed contact with the Congress, a process culminating in the first attempt to link divergent sections in province-wide politics. The resulting disturbances involved three different but some-what connected sets of agitation. Examination of what happened illustrates problems relevant to this panel.

The Punjab government's zeal to protect canal colonists created the very situation it most feared, an aroused countryside susceptible to anti-British propaganda.¹⁶ The paternal canal legislation, which cut across existing rights, and increased rates along the Bari Doab canal precipitated a unique popular agitation. The campaign to alter British policy had rural leaders, techniques, and goals. The colonists leading the movement developed their own strategies without prior planning or coordination with urban organizations. Although mass demonstrations brought out as many as ten thousand protestors, leaders did not stop with petitions but escalated toward nonpayment of land revenue and pressure exerted through Indian army units. Propaganda was designed to appeal to generally illiterate agriculturists, such as cartoons, circulars, and songs echoing the self-respect and warlike traditions of Puniabis. Besides being a rural movement, the agitation also was differentiated from past activity by its noncommunal nature. The colonization bill affected Hindus and Muslims, who mixed freely and even drank from the same vessels. Finally, the agitation was tied to specific issues, and when the British backed down, organized opposition ended.

The Hindu-dominated Lahore Indian Association and a loose coalition of urban Punjabis rallying under the Congress banner led a second agitation. As in the past and future, communal cooperation

16. The following treatment of the disturbances is based on my unpublished dissertation from Duke, 1966 ("The Punjab Disturbances of 1907") and an article, "The Punjab Disturbances of 1907, *Modern Asian Studies*, 1 (1967), 353-383.

and Congress involvement were due primarily to a combination of local circumstance and pressures from outside the Punjab. British favoritism toward the rural population and bureaucratic insensitivity to the expectations of western-educated Punjabis alienated Hindu and Muslim politicians. Non-recognition of elite claims fostered resentment and political experimentation such as had occurred in Bengal and Bombay earlier. This coincided with a tendency to identify with other Indians in response to the climate of racism and imperial domination symbolized by the Curzon regime, and particular events such as the Bengal partition. In addition to sending delegates to Congress sessions, the Indian Association formed branches to organize agitation on a systematic basis. The British were to be coerced into listening to the self-declared leaders of the Punjab. The same men, primarily lawyers, led the district organizations, but the tone of speeches and journalism was anti-British, meetings larger, and demands more radical. Boycott and hartal were employed gingerly for the first time. Amidst the waves of patriotism, some politicians even discussed harnessing discontent in the canal colonies.

British mistakes, such as ill-chosen prosecutions and mishandling of local issues (*begar*, Octroi) fed the agitation, and their responses eventually undercut the mushrooming unrest. The government employed a combination of tactics to maintain order. These included manipulation of groups, seizing suspected ring-leaders (Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai) and attempts to rebuild trust between the bureaucracy and moderate Punjabis.

Despite the British contribution to quieting urban and rural demonstrations, the fact remains that the Punjab Congress proved ineffectual at developing sustained organization and contacts which might have survived the loss of immediate issues. The district organizations disintegrated, secular political activity outside a small elitist circle ended, and the Congress did not become prominent for another decade. The failure further denotes dominant themes in Punjab politics.

Congress supporters were unprepared to capitalize on opportunities for mass mobilization. Surprised by the degree of unrest, they searched for innovations or a plan which would aid in focusing public sentiment. Lajpat Rai, for example, attempted to

secure books on Irish rural politics and unions.¹⁷ Other politicians suggested transplanting a modified form of the Shivaji festival to coordinate resentment and action. Only recently shaken from reliance on petitions, Punjabis had no experience with tactics which might have been successfully employed.

Conflict of interests added to the Congress predicament. The Lahore Indian Association had just completed demonstrations against amendment of the Land Alienation Act. A session of the Punjab Jat Mahasabha in Delhi, reflecting landowning interests, was quick to note the contradiction between that agitation and newly found concern over land revenue rates and hardship in the canal colonies.¹⁸ Unsure of themselves and concerned essentially with their own issues, Congressmen did not know how to proceed.

Unsolved questions of what and how to communicate also affected the effort of politicians. The content of messages—words, symbols, metaphors—are vital in reaching an audience. In the Punjab, the classes active in urban politics tended to value Urdu and English. While conversant with Panjabi, they were not comfortable with the idiom, often agricultural and localised, which could have aided communication with a broader constituency. Such problems were recognized and undoubtedly influenced Lajpat Rai's advocacy of a band of political missionaries to work outside the towns.¹⁹ Significantly, however, he and associates did not carry out the work themselves except on a sporadic basis. The spector of communalism also affected choice of terminology and allusions. Reference to Guru Gobind Singh or Ranjit Singh, for example, might rally Sikhs but alienate Muslims. Finding a continuing issue or appeal common to various sections of Punjab society was difficult if not impossible. Barred from using the rich religious metaphors that previously had been a part of their political life, Congress leaders made short tours to the canal colonies to preach a bland message of national unity and criticism of the British.

17. Lajpat Rai correspondence with Bhai Parmanand in J & P (Judicial and Public files, IOL) 2273, 1911.

18. Meetings reports in *Tribune*, February 15, 1907, p. 4. Also, notes by Charles Rivaz February 12, 1907) and Thomas Walker (February 2, 1907), Keep-With to PRF 108A (Punjab Revenue File, Board of Revenue, Lahore).

19. Editorials and articles by Lajpat Rai in the *Panjabee*, 1905-7.

A final element in the Congress-related agitation was fear of the consequences of open challenges to the British. The western-educated Punjabi did not want to overthrow the government, rather, to assist in decision-making. His previous assumptions remained just below the surface, especially a tendency to identify with the *raj* and western institutions. Thus, checks existed on developing new tactics or going beyond previous agitational limits. Too politicians were vulnerable. Often employed in Government service or the legal profession, they realized that the British would strike out against those in activities judged "seditious". That the government also could injure a particular community or institution associated with "disloyalty" provided an even more effective constraint on wholesale participation by a faction or group. Punjabis were ready to label each other "seditious" in order to injure opponents. Given that atmosphere, to be identified as anti-British could mean having your reference group or favorite charity similarity-labelled. This helps explain the vocal Muslim withdrawal from agitation in April 1907 and their attempts to throw all blame on the Hindu Arya Samaj (in the short-run a successful move).²⁰ Within two months, other groups reacted to impending British sanctions in a similar fashion. Once a movement some thought a permanent Congress resurgence began to break into quarrelling parties, the ill-feeling and old grudges hindered attempts to recoup losses. Repeated failures at politicalization, especially dramatic ones like 1907, further strengthened sub-national patterns.

Those taking advantage of the 1907 unrest were not Congressmen but a few revolutionists just appearing in the Punjab—Ajit Singh and the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh members of the Anjuman-i-Mohibban-i-Watan (Society of the Lovers of Country). Drawn primarily from the nonprofessional classes, they hated the British for a variety of personal reasons.²¹ The Anjuman lacked a vested interest in maintaining the government and therefore re-

20. Meeting reports in *Tribune*, April 25, 1907, pp. 2, 4; also, enclosures to PG to GI, 695, May 3, 1907, GIPOL (Home-Political) August, 1907, 148-235A.

21. Background of members in Barrier, "The Punjab Disturbances," pp. 201-205. Members of the Anjuman included Swaran Singh, Pindi Das, Kishen Singh, Sufi Amba Parshad, Kartar Singh, Ram Chand, Dina Nath,

jected the usual boundaries of politics. Instead, Ajit Singh preached overthrow of the British through resignation from the army, total boycott, and armed insurrection. He spent considerable time in the villages working with local organizations such as Singh Sabhas and the Bar Zamindar Association. A Jat, his speeches were in colloquial Panjabi, filled with misrepresentations of British plans and illusions to folk heroes and motifs familiar to the agriculturists. References to "broken water vessels" and "loss of the turban" stirred his audiences.²² It should be noted, however, that the excitability and daredevil aspects of Ajit Singh endearing him to Jats carried him close to tactical error. His colleagues monitored his speeches and intervened to prevent comments injurious to communal cooperation.

The Anjuman represented a style of politics so divergent from the Punjab experience that Congressmen shunned it. At meetings, for example, horrified lawyers attempted to hush Ajit Singh's call for revolt.²³ The British also observed the new direction, and while mistakingly linking the Arya Samaj, Congress, and Anjuman in a plot, they did isolate Ajit Singh and drive his followers from the Punjab.

III

In summary, what does the Punjab experience tell us about problems of politicization? First, it underscores the dominance of local conditions and patterns in provincial politics. Annexed in 1849, the Punjab was slow to evolve a politically active western-educated elite, and when the elite emerged, it became involved in communal affairs producing subnational commitments. Efforts at political mobilization were limited and directed horizontally rather than vertically. Politics focussed on class or religious issues, with agitation coordinated by communal associations or urban bodies formed to deal with immediate problems. The Lahore Indian

22. Speeches reproduced in GIPOL, August 1907, 148-235A.

23. In Rawalpindi, for example, lawyers literally pulled Ajit Singh from the speaker's platform. Testimony of Gurdas Ram, Amolak Ram, Uttam Chand, and Hans Raj in the Rawalpindi trial proceedings, *Panjabee*, September 4, 1907, pp. 5-8.

Association was an exception, but its Hindu character adversely affected efforts to unite the westernized classes or to generate Congress support. Relying on meetings and petitions, politicians saw no need to work with lower classes in towns or among agriculturists.

Secondly, the discussion demonstrates the often forgotten importance of the British in political development. As Cashman comments, the relationship between politicians and the government affected the range style of agitation. In the Punjab, official reluctance to permit elections for the legislative council postponed efforts to politicize larger groups or to create formal parties. Lagging at least a step behind the constitutional advance of other provinces, the Punjab electorate was extended substantially only in 1919. Before the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, the government maintained itself through nominated majorities, suppression of real or imagined revolutionaries, manipulation of groups and reliance on aristocrats and rural proprietors for support. The 1907 disturbances illustrate how British action could foster or curtail agitation going beyond acceptable limits. In the altered circumstances following the 1919 reforms, the government depended on a rural-based party and again manipulated classes and groups, this time within the legislative arena.

Finally, agrarian and communal networks operated to make the Congress irrelevant. Although we lack detailed treatment of the events between 1910 and 1947, it seems evident that the Punjab Congress rarely became a vital part of the political process, most notably in 1907 and 1919. On both occasions, conditions in the province combined with external stimuli to produce transient nationalist activity, and in both, British responses and the reappearance of communal politics injured attempts to perpetuate a Congress party. When constitutional change necessitated further institutionalization of politics, these now familiar factors weighed against nationalist popularity. Hindu-Muslim-Sikh communalism became more entrenched, and the possibility of unified opposition to the British was lost in legislative confrontation and the rumble of riots.

Political Awakening and Struggle for Freedom in Travancore

BY

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In the decade following 1930 Travancore witnessed intense political unrest. This disquiet has to be viewed against the social and cultural background of the State. Hinduism, Christianity and Islam were the principal religions in Travancore. The followers of each of these religions were organized into numerous groups. Such groups were more numerous among the Hindus. They were divided and sub-divided into many exclusive groups. As the Hindu society was hierarchically organized there was always ground for complaint of domination, of one group by another. Divisions and differences there were among the Christians and Muslims as well; but they were not very conspicuous and on the political plain, they stood, each as one community.

Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century the upper stratum of the Christian community had been becoming prominent in the State on account of education and enlightenment. The Nairs and the Ezhavas were impressed by the economic progress made by the Christian community. Further they realised that the unity and solidarity of the Christian organisation was what supplied its rank and file with additional strength. Consequently, they also took to English education, banking, trade and commerce. The educated section of the Hindus, Christians and Muslims made up a new Middle Class in the State. At the time of the 'Malayali Memorial'¹ members of this new Middle Class had stood shoulder to shoulder to challenge the monopoly of public services by outsiders and to demand their due share in the Government of the State. This had brought out in irrefutable terms how best they prized their liberties and rights and how steadfastly they combated the foe that had threatened their freedom. Class prejudice and schisms hardly deterred them from united action.

1. *A Letter Addressed to the Governor of Madras on the Affairs of Travancore. Introduction.* (Second Edition, 1887).

And further in point of education, political consciousness and leadership, Travancore was almost in the van.² Along with the liberal education imparted to the people, popular institutions modelled on those of the West had been introduced in the State, thus affording an opportunity for getting practical training in the art of administration. It was but natural that in the congenial soil of Travancore, noted for its ancient self-governing and democratic institutions, they struck deep roots and flourished. A Legislative Council was introduced so early as 1888³ and it was reconstituted in 1898⁴ and again in 1919⁵. Although the Council was reorganized on a representative basis and given deliberative powers, it may be noted that, the reform of the Legislative Council which came in 1919 was condemned by the people for, it was initiated by the Maharaja, who according to them had surrendered that right through the reform of 1898. But this contention was met with the counter-argument that the proclamations of the King were as valid as any other law. A wave of protest surged throughout the State and popular feelings ran high. This was followed by another significant event, the Students' Strike on August 23, 1921.⁶ The incident was significant since it rallied public opinion and awakened the political consciousness of the younger generation, who decided to fight for responsible government. The inadequacy of Regulation I of 1919 (embodying Legislative Council Reform) to meet the modest demands of the people for Responsible Government, created bitterness among the people. This was partly met by Regulation II of October 4, 1921.⁷ As per the provisions of this Regulation, the Legislative Council was constituted on a comparatively wider franchise with an elected non-official majority. Besides the right of interpellation, discussion of the budget and moving of resolutions was also granted to it. In addition to the Legislative Council, a Popular Assembly was also brought into existence in 1904 with the noble motive

2. Memorial submitted to His Excellency the Viceroy by the people of Travancore in 1931. (*Travancore Today: Her struggle for freedom*, pp. 29-30).

3. *The Travancore Government Gazette*, April 24, 1888.

4. *Ibid.*; March 29, 1898, No. 13, XXXVI, 714-16.

5. *Ibid.*; September 9, 1919, Part I, 1075-1111.

6. Important Papers connected with the Students' Strike (August-September) 1921, Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum.

7. *Op. cit.*, October 4, 1921, Part II, 747-54.

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of popularising the administration and associating the people with the Government of the State.

In the field of civic administration also the State had made rapid strides. As early as the third decade of the twentieth century, Travancore had as many as nineteen Municipalities with large elective non-official majorities and with elected non-official presidents in all but one.⁸ There were other popular institutions also such as the Village Panchayat Courts, Irrigation Boards and the Economic Development Boards. All these institutions were working satisfactorily and the sobriety, moderation and sense of responsibility displayed by popular representatives therein, had been testified to by the successive Dewans of the State. In this connection it is worthy of notice that women here enjoyed equal status with men in respect of political and civic rights. And last but not least, an independent judiciary, another *sine qua non* of a constitutional State had been in existence here from 1882. Thus all elements of popular government had long been in existence and what now remained to make it logically complete so as to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people was to introduce full Responsible Government in the State.⁹

The Sri Mulam Popular Assembly had been a vigorous forum for highlighting the demand¹⁰ for Responsible Government. Apart from it, the Press had always been an important medium which infiltrated into the public mind and propogated the ideals of freedom and democracy. Most of the articles published in the Dailies reverberated with the spirit of questioning the authority of the executive and with the longing to have Responsible Government. Drastic measures were taken to suppress the newspapers that exposed villainy of the government. The agitation¹¹ that followed in its trail could not be deemed anything like a mass awakening. It was only the faint beginning of a revelation that the State was ultimately set for the realisation of Responsible Government. It was only natural that all political and social organisations in the State clamoured for the establishment of Responsible Gov-

8. The Memorial submitted to His Excellency, the Viceroy by the people of Travancore, 1931. (*Travancore Today—Her struggle for freedom*, p. 29).

9. *loc. cit.*

10. *The Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings*, 18th Session, March 11, 1922, p. 187.

11. File No. 717, 1926, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

ernment. At last under compelling circumstances like the Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924, the South Indian States Peoples' Conference of 1929, and the sovereign yielded by granting the Reforms of 1932.¹²

Ever since the Malayali Memorial, the educated Nairs were admitted in large numbers to the public services. In the Legislative Council of the State the Nairs contrived to have a majority, under the Reforms of 1932. The Christian, Ezhava and Muslim sections of the New Middle Class in the State therefore drifted to one side while the Nairs to the other. Each group alerted its community in order to win its cause, by adducing a communal colouring to the movement of others. Thus when the Government officially announced the Constitutional Reforms of 1932, these neglected communities disapproved of them and decided to launch a statewide agitation to procure in the scheme of the legislature, their due representation. They organized themselves into a party called the All Travancore Joint Political Congress and the agitation organized by them had come to be known as the *Nivarthanam* or "The Abstention Movement".¹³ Since a state-wide agitation was not an easy job, it had always been exploring every possible avenue to find out an amicable settlement of the differences between the government and the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities, on the question of representation in the Legislative Council. A series of suggestions of constitutional reforms were made by the different organisations into which these communities were socially segregated which included among other things reservation of seats in proportion to population and Responsible Government. But the government's preparedness to sanction a few reserved seats to the aggrieved communities and filling them through nomination was deplored and the Joint Political Congress decided to abstain from the legislature envisaged through the Reforms of 1932.

It would be quite fitting here to investigate into the complicity of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer in the framing of the Legislative Reforms of 1932, although strictly speaking he was only the constitutional adviser and not the Dewan (Austin was the Dewan

12. *Travancore Government Gazette*, October 29, 1932.

13. *The Malabar Mail*, November 25, 1962. (Account of Willington's (Travancore) Visit by M. M. Varkey).

then). Despite the claims of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer that he had no hand in the internal administration of the State, he expressed himself quite subjectively,¹⁴ that, the prudent plan would be for all the communities to give the new reforms a trial. He shared the promise made to the Nair deputation that if after the first elections under the reforms any serious injustice manifested itself, he would also recommend reconsideration of the subject of representation.¹⁵ By this statement, it was believed that he was identifying himself with the Nairs and their newspapers and was giving a verified threat to the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities, that, if they did not stop their agitation, repression would be resorted to. This attitude of the constitutional adviser to the Maharaja obliged the Joint Political Congress to demand¹⁶ his dismissal from the service of the State. The statements made by the constitutional adviser were not credited with sincerity and truthfulness by the conscious public.¹⁷ Therefore no time was spared by the Joint Political Congress to launch the agitation.

Due publicity was given to the movement and the fairness of its demands by the Press within and outside the State. The government even resorted to the gagging of the Press. The suppression of *The Dasan*, to which reference was already made was the first step. At the same time, the Government took no action against *The Samadarsi* a newspaper owned by Nairs which published a highly provocative and explosive article against His Excellency the Viceroy, His Majesty the King Emperor and His Holiness the Pope. Commenting on it *The Malayala Manorama* observed that "it was one of the most mischievous publications calculated to produce class hatred. The unfailing sentinel of the interests of the Paramount Power, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, should not have

14. Statement by the Associated Press of India (Trivandrum Branch) February 21, 1933.

15. *Travancore—The Present Political Problem*, p. 162.

16. *The Dasan*, March 25, 1933 (The article under the caption 'Knight Errant' runs as follows: "One does not need much brains to see that in view of his apparently isolated position as the legal and constitutional adviser, and his now notorious interference in matters of internal administration, Sir C. P's. retention in Travancore is at once dangerous and demoralising").

17. Resolution adopted at the joint meeting of the three communities—File No. 1751/1933, English Records, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

assumed ignorance and kept quiet in respect of the above publication in *Samadarsi*".¹⁸ This provided a significant instance of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer's *modus operandi*. Newspapers outside the State lent full support to the movement. *The Hindu*¹⁹ in a spirited article expressed the hope that no time would be lost in negotiating a satisfactory settlement of the problem involved in the Abstention Movement. Similarly *The Indian Express*, in a sub-leader vigorously attacked the barbarian attitude of the government to the Joint Political Congress and the Abstention Movement. A portion of it is quoted below:

"Continued neglect on the part of the government concerned to recognise and assuage the discontent of the people may so accentuate the situation.....that in the end may necessitate the employment of the armoured car and the bombing aeroplane. But it is also possible for a government to go to the other extreme and deal with the popular discontent by the method of the mailed fist that may drive a healthy political movement underground and pave the way for periodic outbursts of popular indignation. We are afraid that the government of the Maharaja of Travancore is running the risk of the latter danger by their uncompromising attitude towards the demands of the minority communities."²⁰

As the Abstentionists persisted in their demands the government tried all means in its power to misrepresent and discredit the abstentionists. So as to ensure the sympathy of the British government the Abstention Movement was dubbed non-co-operation under a different label.²¹ Systematic repression was resorted to and as a follow-up the government even went to the extent of manipulating to their advantage the first elections under the Reforms of 1932. The sordid role played by the government was well reflected in the statement of the Joint Political Congress issued after election.²² Soon the Joint Political Congress submitted

18. *Malayala Manorama*, May 24, 1933.

19. *The Hindu*, March 3, 1933.

20. *The Indian Express*, April 21, 1933.

21. For details vide, 'Lord Willington's Visit' published in the *Malabar Mail*, November 25, 1962.

22. Statement of the Joint Political Conference, August 25, 1933.

a memorial to the Dewan.²³ It stated that owing to the suppressive measures and unlawful interference of the government there was no free election and that the new Houses of the legislature were not at all representative of the different communities and various interests of the State, that the reformed legislature only tended to strengthen the predominance of the Nair, that their grievances were genuine and that the remedy lay in reconstituting the legislature so as to give representation to all major communities in proportion to their population. The government stood firm and the aggrieved, as a mark of protest, decided to abstain from the new legislature. This was mainly the result of the unhelpful attitude of the government created by the enmity of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer.²⁴

This became all the more clear with the appointment of Sir Mohamed Habibulla as the Dewan of Travancore. There was a general gust of enthusiasm all over the State and it was hoped that he would have resolved the longstanding grievance of the abstentionists. *The Malabar Herald* subscribed to the same view and expressed the hope that Sir Mohamed Habibulla would immortalise his regime in Travancore by removing the disabilities of the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities before he would lay down the reins of his office and thus come in for their everlasting gratitude.²⁵ To a very great extent this became a reality when he took steps to remove a few disabilities which had denied them admittance into the higher government appointments. Nevertheless the composition of the legislature remained unaltered and the general discriminatory treatment continued.

The Abstention Movement soon became rejuvenated with the entry of a new fighter. It was C. Kesavan who shouldered the burdens of the S.N.D.P. Yogam during this time. It must be admitted that he had the benediction of the Yogam for his political work. Shortly he became the moving spirit in the Abstention Movement and the government which found in him enemy No. one had no alternative but to order his arrest and detention. Immediately after the famous meeting of the All Travancore Joint

23. File No. 1315/1933, Dated October 11, 1933, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

24. File No. 148.CS Dated October 26, 1933, Kerala Govt. Secretariat.

25. *The Malabar Herald*, October 30, 1934.

Political Congress on June 7, 1935 at Kozhencheri²⁶ he was arrested. The statement which he issued to the Press on the eve of his arrest, bristled with the longing of the large mass of the people of the State for freedom and equality. He contended that his arrest was a resounding victory or a presage of the coming of the day when true equality would prevail among all the subjects of the Maharaja.²⁷ With the arrest of C. Kesavan an unprecedented spirit of unity pervaded the entire rank and file of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress.

On the appointment of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer as the Dewan of Travancore, the Working Committee of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress issued a statement expressing fear and suspicion at the move.²⁸ Following this a deputation of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress waited on the Dewan on October 28, 1936 and presented him with a memorandum²⁹ of grievances relating to freedom of the Press, worship, temple entry and persecution of the leaders of the Political Congress.³⁰

Great developments took place subsequent to the release of C. Kesavan from prison, which tended to intensify the political fervour and courage of the people fighting for Responsible Government.³¹ In the warm reception given to C. Kesavan at Alleppey, T. M. Varghese the Deputy President of the Sri Mulam Assembly, accorded to him a warm welcome on behalf of the fifty-one lakhs of people of the State. This speech was made a subject of great controversy in the State and critics had the unreserved blessings of the government.³² The consequence was the resignation of T. M. Varghese.

It will not be redundant to take stock of the achievements made by the Joint Political Congress through persistent agitation.

26. S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p. 228.

27. Letter from the S.N.D.P. Yogam Office, Quilon, addressed to the General Secretary, S.N.D.P. Yogam, dated June 7, 1935.

28. Statement of the Working Committee of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress, September 20, 1936.

29. Memorandum submitted to the Dewan by the deputation of the Joint Political Congress, October 28, 1936.

30. File No. D. Dis 662-45, CS. English Records, Kerala Government Secretariat.

31. *Malayala Manorama*, October 5, 1937.

32. *The Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XI, 203.

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In kindling political consciousness leading to the realisation of responsible government, the Joint Political Congress made much headway. Ever since the Malayali Memorial the people of the State were getting alive to a new sense of political life which would ensure them a due share in their government. As a first step in this direction, recruitment rules for the public services were reorientated and revised.³³ As per the new rules forty per cent of the intermediate section of the public services was set apart for the backward communities, and all jobs in the lower divisions of the services were required to be given in proportion to population, though communal representation was not accepted as the principle. The Ezhavas got admittance into the State army as well. Thus the monopoly enjoyed by certain communities (Brahmins and later Nairs) in the public services was broken.

As a result of the agitation the government adopted measures to rectify the inequalities in the legislative bodies. Accordingly the government issued a Press Communique in 1937 by which it was provided that the Ezhavas would get reservation of eight seats in the Legislative Assembly and two in the Council by election.³⁴ In the same way the Muslims and the Latin Christians also were to get three seats each in the Assembly by means of reservation. A franchise commissioner was appointed and representations were submitted to him by the Joint Political Congress. In consequence constituencies were rearranged and the non-transferable single vote system was introduced. Subsequent elections bore ample testimony to the good effects of the changes made.

Mention had already been made of the arrest of C. Kesavan. An unprecedented spirit of unity pervaded the entire Ezhava community. The Ezhavas in sore straits took a grim determination to face all consequences for the attainment of their legitimate rights and claims. They were so much disgusted by the total neglect of their rights that they decided to get converted to other religions. Provoked by the agitation for conversion to other faiths, the government issued the famous Temple Entry Proclamation.³⁵ What is significant is that this was only the culmination of a plot hatched

33. File R. Dis. 893/Genl. dated June 25, 1935—English Records, Kerala Government Secretariat.

34. S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p. 230.

35. Souvenir of the Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial, p. 1.

by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer against the possible recurrence of coalition of communities against the government trying to deny the claims of the people for responsible government, which was gradually gaining ground in the imagination of people of the State. The credit for having created an atmosphere for these reforms, no doubt, goes to the Joint Political Congress.

Again it was under the instrumentality of the Joint Political Congress that the demand for Responsible Government was given due publicity. It was again through the Herculean efforts of the Joint Political Congress that this proposition began to engage the serious attention of the government.³⁶ This is a conclusive proof which establishes the fact that the Joint Political Congress had something nobler to achieve than the trifle of an appointment or a seat in the legislative bodies as it would be supposed. At the same time it must be admitted that as the Joint Political Congress was tactically and organisationally defective for it precuded the Nairs, it was felt that a new party embracing all sections of the communities should be created for launching an active struggle for Responsible Government. "The State Congress was the outcome of it."³⁷ Thus was born in Travancore the first political party which through its selfless devotion had brought about wonderful changes in the political life of the people. It would therefore be only fair to conclude, as Mr. K. Sukumaran, the editor of *Kerala Kaumudi* had observed that the Travancore State Congress was fundamentally the All Travancore Joint Political Congress under a new name.³⁸

While yet the leaders of the State were entirely absorbed in the formation of the State Congress the feasibility of the establishment in Travancore of Responsible Government had prominently become a subject of acrimonious controversy in the Press. The question had for some time been before the public but never before had it attracted greater public attention than it did during the closing months of 1937. Almost every day opinions had been expressed in the Press in respect of the constitutional possibility of Responsible Government, under the conditions that had been

36. *Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XI, 806—7.

37. Matthew. C. P., *I have borne much*, p. 54.

38. For details vide his article under the caption 'V. K. Velayudhan, published in the *S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir*.

taken for granted. Attempts had been made to canvass public opinion both for and against the idea. It was then that the statement of Lord Lothian regarding Princes and Paramountcy appeared. In it he said:

"Paramountcy certainly cannot be interpreted to mean that Great Britain has the duty of supporting a ruler in denying to his own subjects the very rights which have been established by the authority of Parliament throughout British India".³⁹

This statement was at once inspiring and encouraging as far as the Indian States' people were concerned, although Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer condemned it as filth for which no legislature would be responsible.⁴⁰ Yet the statement was a significant announcement because one great apprehension entertained by the people of the State that the British Government would abrogate the advances proposed in respect of Responsible Government, had been removed.

In consequence the Sri Mulam Assembly which had been an important forum for focusing popular demand, resounded with the cry for Responsible Government. On February 2, 1938 T. M. Varghese tabled an adjournment motion to discuss the urgent need for immediate steps being taken by the Government for the establishment of Responsible Government in the State.⁴¹ It is significant to note that the Responsible Government asked for was one under the aegis of the Maharaja. The Dewan-President who made a long statement on the occasion suggested only one difficulty; he seemed to fancy that unlimited autocracy for the State was implicit in the treaty relations between the Paramount Power and the State. He conveyed the idea that the grant of Responsible Government was incompatible with the existing treaty relations. Commenting on this *The Hindu* said:

"It is unthinkable that, if any State should put forward proposals conceived in a liberal spirit for conferring substantial power on the people, the Paramount Power will oppose it; it

39. *The Madras Mail*, January 24, 1938.

40. *Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XI, 807.

41. *Ibid*, XI, 804.

ought on the contrary to applaud and actively assist such a move, and the repeated exhortations to the Princes by the Viceroy and others in authority to move with the times, go to confirm the belief that they will not fail in this elementary duty. It will therefore not do for the Governments of the States to put forward their obligations to the Paramount Power as an excuse for not satisfying the legitimate demand of the people for a full and effective voice in the administration."⁴²

All leading newspapers of the time strongly pleaded for the introduction of Responsible Government since there was strong popular demand for it. And further, the contentions of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer were irreparably damaged when Earl Winterton made a policy statement, by way of answer to the query put by Captain Heilgers, in the House of Commons. It runs as follows:

"The consent of the Paramount Power has not been required before such advances have been approved by the various Princes, nor so far as I am aware, has it been sought in such matters. The Paramount Power would, in ordinary circumstances, confine itself to tendering advice when consulted."⁴³

This unambiguous statement of Earl Winterton was universally welcomed in all the Indian States. It was hailed as "the States Peoples' Magna Carta."⁴⁴ Thus the supposed impediment to constitutional progress proved to be a fiction and that the fact was that, it solely rested within the discretion of the ruler. The Travancore State Congress therefore, emphatically appealed to the Government to take immediate steps for the grant of Responsible Government in the State.⁴⁵ *The Hindu* whole-heartedly welcomed the Winterton declaration and advised the Indian rulers that they should in the light of this statement have no further hesitation in pushing through with constitutional reforms, calculated to satisfy

42. *The Hindu*, February 4, 1938.

43. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 1937-38, Vol. 332, February 21, 1938, p. 6.

44. *The Madras Mail* February 23, 1938.

45. *Travancore Today—Her struggle for freedom* (The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress) Appendices, Part I, No. 12, p. 44.

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the legitimate ambition of their people.⁴⁶ *The Indian Express* also exhorted the Dewan to avail himself of the opportunity presented by the statement of Winterton.⁴⁷ Neither the learned exposition of Paramountcy relation of Indian States by Butler Committee, nor the unambiguous elucidation of it by Lord Lothian, nor the categorical statement of Earl Winterton produced any noticeable effect on the adamant attitude of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer towards the question of Responsible Government. He was implacable and continued to be so till his ignominious retreat from the State in 1947.

It became now clear that the Government themselves would be the greatest obstacle in the way, and that it would not so much as even tolerate a movement, however peaceful and constitutional it might be, for the establishment of Responsible Government in the State. Their open hostility expressed itself in several ways. No sooner had the State Congress come into being than its meetings were banned and its members persecuted. The honour of being the first victim of the fury of the Dewan went to A. Narayana Pillai, who had played the key role in the formation of the Travancore State Congress.

An article published by him under the caption 'The Problem of representation in the Public Service and Nairs', furnished the ostensible ground for launching a prosecution against him for sedition and creation of communal hatred.⁴⁸ A show-cause notice was served on him on January 28, 1938.⁴⁹ Finding that A. Narayana Pillai was disposed neither to apologise nor was he in a mood to withdraw the article he had written, the Government gave orders for his prosecution.⁵⁰ He was arrested on February 22 and denying all chances of a fair trial, he was in the end convicted. What is surprising is that the court did not even permit⁵¹ K. F. Nariman to appear for the accused on the flimsy ground that he had been convicted in Bombay for activities directed against the State, and

46. *The Hindu*, February 23, 1938.

47. *The Indian Express*, February 28, 1938.

48. *Malayala Rajyam*, January 8, 1938.

49. File No. 28[38]CS dated January 28, 1938, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

50. Order No. 29[38]CS dated February 21, 1938, Ibid;

51. Proceedings of the Sessions Court of Trivandrum, File S.C. No. 33 of April 1, 1938.

that the real aim in inviting K. F. Nariman to appear for the accused was to create sensation and unrest in the State. The force of public opinion in respect of this trial was fully manifested in the comments that appeared in the nationalist newspapers outside the State⁵² which joined in condemning the attitude of the Government.

As the declared object of the State Congress was the attainment of Responsible Government on the basis of adult franchise (surely under the aegis of the Maharaja) Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer who wanted to cling to power, initiated a policy of unprecedented repression. To prevent all propaganda meetings of the State Congress the promulgation of prohibitory orders⁵³ or the forcible dispersal of meetings was the strategy resorted to by the Government. Manhandling of active Congress leaders one by one with the help of police agents and vagrants was also tried.⁵⁴ The honour, person and property of Congress sympathisers were rudely threatened by those who were duty-bound to protect them. This policy of repression however, did not send the workers of the Congress underground. With undaunted spirit they tried to expose the villainy of the Government through the forum of the Sri Mulam Assembly.⁵⁵ The growth of the Government found good expression in the later policy of revenge and personal vendetta. It was in this connection that M. R. Madhava Varier, the editor of *Malayali* and Thomas Mathew Muthalali, the editor of *Malabar Advocate* were assaulted under the very nose of the authorities, and that too in open day-light.⁵⁶ Miss Annie Mascarene a member of the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress, was the next target of attack. She was robbed, and assaulted.⁵⁷ K. P. Nilakanta Pillai the Joint Secretary of the State Congress, was mercilessly beaten.⁵⁸ These incidents evoked widespread public indignation not only in the State, but also outside. The Government's

52. *The Free Press Journal*, April 3, 1938, and *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 4, 1938.

53. *Travancore Today*, pp. 138-143.

54. *Ibid*, pp. 170-86, 195.

55. *Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, XII, 70; 78-9; 163-4; and 284.

56. *Ibid*, XI, 519.

57. Vide relevant papers (*Travancore Today*, pp. 170-86).

58. *Ibid*, p. 195.

lukewarm policy was a sure indication of their complicity in the above incidents. Thus the problem really confronted by the State Congress then was whether citizens were free to exercise their fundamental civic rights in the teeth of organized tyranny of hirelings of the Government.

With grim determination and unflinching courage the State Congress carried on its propaganda in and outside the State. To educate public opinion in Madras many meetings were arranged to be held there also.⁵⁹ And these produced very lasting effect so far as they helped to create an all India opinion about the true condition of affairs in the State. The fear entertained by many including Dr. Pattabhi Sitharamayya that the State Congress still had something like a communal axe to grind, proved to be quite unwarranted.⁶⁰ After having thus prepared the background, the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress submitted the historic Memorial to the Maharaja on May 30, 1938. It will bear out fully the force behind the demand for Responsible Government. The spirit of moderation that vibrates through every word in which it was couched will surely justify the cause of the people of Travancore, particularly in the context of the great strides that had been made already in British India.

The very first proposition, with which the memorial is prefaced, was a specimen of moderation. It runs thus:

"The powers now exercised by the Dewan may be vested in a cabinet of ministers responsible to the Legislature and subject to the powers and prerogatives of His Highness the Maharaja."⁶¹

There is indeed no trace of any villainy or sabotage either implied or expressed. What the people asked for was only a legitimate share in the government of their State. To substitute an irresponsible Dewan with a Cabinet responsible to the legislature, was the most modest of all modest aspirations. Denial of the same in the modern context would end in a *coup d'etat*. Further

59. *Travancore Today, Her struggle for freedom Appendices*, pp. 63-88.

60. *Ibid.*, Statement of A. K. Pillai, on May 6, 1938, pp. 84-86.

61. *Ibid.*, The Memorial, Demand 1.

the demand was far from being rash as it adumbrated a scheme of Responsible Government within the frame-work of the powers and prerogatives of the Maharaja.

Again the reform of the legislature proposed through the Memorial was admittedly so modest and fitting to a T, to democratic ethics, that it hardly merited criticism and condemnation even at the hands of the Dewan. The position will become clear from a perusal of the proviso which runs as follows:

"The Legislature may be reformed and franchise extended to all adults with adequate safeguards for the protection of minority interests and the system of nominating members to the Legislature may be abolished and the Presidents of the Legislative Chambers be allowed to be elected by the members thereof."⁶²

Adult franchise was nothing new, for it had been already introduced in British India. The system of nomination which had come to stay in Travancore was indeed opposed to all canons of true representation. Apart from the reform of franchise, the Congress demanded that the Presidents of the Legislatures should be persons responsible to the House over which they preside and, therefore, headship of the Dewan was incompatible with democratic traditions.

The declaration of fundamental rights, which formed the third demand,⁶³ was only a reflection of the blessings of Responsible Government. Without freedom of speech and association human personality will tend to get stunted. It is through the acid test of free criticism that public opinion has to get itself crystallised.

The most revolutionary of all was the economic right which it sought to realize. "A living wage and reasonable conditions of work" are the *sine qua non* of any healthy society. That the State Congress recognised the value of economic freedom and gave equal stress to it as a political right indicates par excellence the maturity of political wisdom it had imbibed.

The judiciary had been subservient to the executive in Travancore, ever since the assumption of the Dewanship by Sir C. P.

62. *Ibid*, The Memorial, Demand 2.

63. *Lpc. cit*,

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Ramaswami Iyer, and this was certainly detrimental to individual liberty. The papers⁶⁴ connected with the sedition case of A. Narayana Pillai will amply bear out this truth. This was the main count which induced the State Congress to incorporate the provision "to restore and ensure" the independence of the judiciary, in the Memorial.

The crystallisation of public opinion in favour of Responsible Government was witnessed through the above Memorial. The Congress therefore prayed that the present system must be scrapped so as to provide for Responsible Government to the people lest there should be open agitation.

The Government of Travancore decided to suppress the threatened agitation with a strong hand. The State Congress and the Youth League another powerful political weapon of the youth, were declared unlawful organisations. Under these circumstances the State Congress decided to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement with effect from August 26, 1938. The immediate reaction of the Government was far from being helpful and therefore it took rigorous action against the leaders of the State Congress, by promulgating the Criminal Law Amendment Act drawn upon the lines of the parallel British Indian Act of 1932.⁶⁵ Most of the popular leaders were informed of this new Regulation.⁶⁶ Undeterred by the threat of the Government the State Congress organised protest meetings far and wide.⁶⁷ In a great frenzy of despair the Government liquidated the National Quilon Bank,⁶⁸ closed down the University College,⁶⁹ and fired at peaceful processions in Neyyatinkara,⁷⁰ Puthupally and Quilon. Having provided with the first martyr, the victim of the Neyyatinkara firing,

64. *Ibid*; Appendices Part II, pp. 92-132.

65. Sreedhara Menon. A. *Kerala District Gazetteers, Trivandrum*, p. 236.

66. *Kerala Dwani*, July 13, 1938 (Article by E. M. Kovoor).

67. *Weekly Secret Bulletin*, Vol. V, No. 35, August 25, 1938;... p. 3.

68. *Ibid*; Vol. V. No. 38. September 17, 1938, p. 5. (The Government suspected that the Bank was directly involved in the scheme of agitation).

69. *Ibid*; Vol. V, No. 35, August 25, 1938, p. 4. (The Students of the College hooted at the Maharaja).

70. *Ibid*; Vol. V..No. 35, August 27, 1938. p. 5.

the cause flourished.⁷¹ And the Dewan only hardened his heart while the Congress made headway in its programme of Civil Disobedience. To intensify the agitation, the Action Council decided to organise a mass demonstration under Accamma Cherian, the twelfth President of the State Congress in November 1938, during the birthday celebrations of the Maharaja. . Actually every thing was set, when, as a tactical move the Government removed the ban on the Congress and released all political prisoners. Nevertheless the procession came and it was barricaded near the palace. Then it moved to Thampanur where it demonstrated a show of victory. Intoxicated with the initial triumph the people sang the chorus of independence. This was indeed a real victory for the popular cause.

The Dewan at his wits' end indulged in diatribes against the State Congress describing it as a communal organ having little popular support for it. He also did not hesitate to say that the State Congress was an illegitimate offspring, blood not of the same blood and bone, not of the same bone, of the Indian National Congress. In order to confound the people, a counter organisation with the label of 'Travancore National Congress' was brought into being by opportunists, loyalists and caste Hindus. No doubt it had originated from the fertile brain of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. But with all blessings of men in authority, it died a natural death all too soon.

The political atmosphere was becoming tense day by day. The unconditional withdrawal of the Memorial was insisted upon by the Dewan before any talk for reconciliation. To enlighten Gandhiji about the real political situation in Travancore a deputation consisting of A. Thanu Pillai and T. M. Varghese waited upon him.⁷² Gandhiji pleaded for the withdrawal of the Memorial.⁷³ In the State Congress itself there was strong difference of opinion regarding the withdrawal of the Memorial. Under some pretext or other, the leaders of the Congress were shut up in jail. Taking into account the peculiar situation prevailing, the Working Committee decided to withdraw the Memorial. The extremists who

71. George Woodcock, *Kerala (A portrait of the Malabar Coast)*, p. 239.

72. *Weekly Secret Bulletin*, Vol. V, No. 43, October 22, 1938, p. 2.

73. *Ibid*; Vol. V. No. 51, p. 2.

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hardly subscribed to the decision of the Working Committee, left the Congress and joined the Youth League.⁷⁴ "Of its ranks were later to emerge the leaders of the Communist Party and the various Socialist Parties in Southern Kerala."⁷⁵

With the commencement of the Second World War the arms of the Government were further strengthened. Under camouflage of emergency even the very common civic rights were denied.⁷⁶ The Press was gagged.⁷⁷ The attitude of the All-India Congress Organisation was far from being encouraging because of its passive approach to the States' problem. However, with the 'Quit India Agitation' of August 1942, the State Congress also threw in their lot with the movement. But the extremists who left the camp of the Congress declared themselves to be communists.⁷⁸ They condemned the agitation of the Congress⁷⁹ and for this reason the Quit India Agitation did not gather much momentum in Travancore. Students, however organised strikes and demonstrations as compensation for this. The general elections of 1944 were conducted peacefully. But the Government kept the leaders at arms' distance by disqualifying their nominations for political conviction.⁸⁰ In spite of its being a minority, the State Congress put up a brave fight against the Dictator whose intelligent manoeuvring of the political situation was more than counter-balanced by its selfless devotion to the cause of Responsible Government.

The achievement of Responsible Government in Travancore came as the dramatic climax of a series of sensational developments that took place within and without Travancore in the year 1946-47. The British Government declared their intention of quitting India. Commenting on the above, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer stated that with the lapse of paramountcy, supreme power would revert to the rulers of States.⁸¹ Technically this sounded plausible. But judged

74. *loc cit.*

75. George Woodcock, *Op. cit.* p. 239.

76. Gandhi, M. K. *The Indian States Problem*, pp. 382-85.

77. *Ibid*; p. 660.

78. George Woodcock, *op. cit.* p. 246.

79. Sreedhara Menon. A., *Kerala District Gazetteers (Trivandrum)*, p. 241.

80. Gandhi, M. K. *The Indian States' Problem*. p. 453.

81. *Travancore Information and Listener*, January 1947, p. 9.

from the agitation of the Joint Political Congress and the State Congress the Dewan should have read between the lines of Travancore history and understood the pressure of the popular demand for Responsible Government. The Punnappa-Vayalar struggle, a move against the Dewan for the achievement of Responsible Government, though crushed mercilessly, formed an affair not wholly unconnected with the general tone of political life.⁸² Thus much water had flowed under the bridge and the people of the State were determined to put an end to the rule of the Dewan, which he was trying with frantic tenacity to perpetuate under camouflage of subtle legal quibbles.

In the history of the struggle for Responsible Government, the subsequent developments left a deep mark. In March 1947, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer made the vital disclosure that Travancore chose to remain a free State with the lapse of paramountcy. The Dewan unequivocally asserted that nothing short of an open war would deter Travancore from becoming so. And the whole propaganda machine of the State was geared to this end. The people on their part were bent upon winning their independence. Travancore was again in the vortex of a political struggle and the Government employed all in their power to meet the situation. One of the highlights of the struggle was the firing at Pettah, Trivandrum, in which three persons were killed.⁸³ This in fact proved to be the last straw. The infuriated public were ready for any act of terrorism. A few days after the above firing, on July 25, 1947, an unsuccessful attempt was made on Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer's life. The last scene closed with the laying down of the Dewanship by him on August, 19, 1948.⁸⁴ This paved the way for Responsible Government in Travancore, the reward of the past sufferings of the people.

82. See the biased version of the affair given by Sri E. M. Kovoov in a biographical sketch of T. M. Varghese p. 146. (The conclusion drawn above is on the basis of the sympathetic treatment extended to prisoners and convicts connected with the affair, immediately after the establishment of Responsible Government).

83. *Travancore Information and Listener*, April 1947, p. 40.

84. Sreedhara Menon, A., *A Survey of Kerala History*, p. 361.

85. *Travancore Gazette Extraordinary*, August 19, 1949.

Bristol and the Death of Rammohun Roy

BY

B. M. SANKHDHER

"He became worse every few minutes; his breathing more rattling and impeded; his pulse imperceptible. He moved about his right arm constantly and his left arm a little, a few hours before his death. It was a beautiful moonlight night; on one side of the window, as Mr. Hare, Miss Kiddell and I looked out of it, was the calm rural midnight scene; on the other, this extraordinary man dying. I shall never forget the moment. Miss Hare, now hopeless and overcome, could not summon courage to hang over the dying Rajah, as she did while soothing or feeding him ere hope had left her, and remained sobbing in the chair near; the young Rajah (Rammohun Roy's son, Raja Ram) was generally holding his hand ... At half-past two, Mr. Hare came into room and told me it was all over."¹

This is how Dr. Estlin, the attending physician described the passing away of Rammohun Roy at Bristol on September 27, 1833. The news of his death spread like wild fire. He was described as one of the most extraordinary men of his age and his death was mourned as a "public calamity".² The whole Bristol was in tears. The *Bristol Mercury*, one of the leading newspapers of Bristol, founded by William Henry Somerton, wrote under the caption: "Death of Rammohun Roy" on September, 28, 1833: "It is with infinite regret that we are compelled to announce the death of this highly intelligent and gifted individual, who expired yesterday morning at Stapleton Grove near this city; at which place he was on a visit . . . Future generations in India will rank his name among those of the greatest benefactors to that country; and it speaks much in his praise that while his religion, though somewhat a matter of doubt, was supposed to assimilate the doctrine of Unitarianism, yet Rammohun Roy had gained the

1. Mary Carpenter, *The Last Days in England of Rajah Rammohun Roy*, 1866. The work provides information about the persons present at the time of Rammohun Roy's death.

2. *The Times*, London, September 30, 1833;
The Englishman, Calcutta, February, 1834.

respect and goodwill of the most inveterate antagonists of those doctrines. Rammohun Roy was a reformer in a land where the spirit of conservatism holds a diabolic sway—yet more than that, he was a reformer in religion . . . A great man and a good man has died with him.”³

The *Bristol Mercury* was not alone in lamenting the death of this Indian saint and reformer, but every newspaper and periodical, whether liberal or conservative, both in Bristol and outside, echoed the same sentiments and paid their highest tributes to the memory of Rammohun Roy. Felix Farley’s *Bristol Journal*, published the news of Rammohun Roy’s death on September 28, 1833 and wrote: “This learned Indian, who some years ago abjured the Brahminical for the Christian religion, died yesterday at Stapleton, near this city, where he was on a visit. We understand, he professed the Unitarian creed.”⁴ On October 5, 1833, this conservative journal, owned and conducted by James Martin, published a long biographical sketch of Rammohun Roy, and made the following announcement regarding a condolence meeting at Lewin’s Mead Chapel in Bristol: “We are requested to state that a discourse will be delivered in Lewin’s Mead Chapel, tomorrow evening, in relation to the death of Raja Rammohun Roy. The service begins at six o’clock.”⁵

On October 26, 1833, the *Bristol Mercury*, published a long poem: “On the Interment of the Rajah Rammohun Roy at Stapleton Grove on Friday, the 18th October, 1833”. It described the great accomplishments of Rammohun Roy, who tried throughout his life to awaken his ‘nation sat in darkness’⁶ of prejudice, ignorance and superstition. The *Bristol Mercury*, however, did not mourn the death of this enlightened individual without a ray of optimism. It remarked:

The Angel of the Lord hath called away
His faithful servant, at the evening hour,
While glowing tints still gild the western sky.
Yet though around our hearts dark sorrow lour,
And tears of sad regret must dim the eye,
We mourn not without hope. Thy race is run

3. *The Bristol Mercury*, Bristol, September 28, 1833.

4. Felix Farley’s *Bristol Journal*, Bristol, September 28, 1833.

5. *Ibid*, October 5, 1833.

6. *The Bristol Mercury*, Bristol, October 26, 1833.

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Enter thy rest! Servant of God—"Well done."⁷
 William Henry Somerton's liberal journal further wrote:
 Thou art gone from us but thy memory dear
 To all that knew thee yet as with us-ne'er are riven
 The bands of Christian love!—Thy mortal frame
 With us is laid in holy silent rest:
 Thy spirit is immortal, and thy name
 Shall by thy countrymen be ever blest
 E'en from the tomb thy words with power shall rize,
 Shall touch their breasts, and bear them to the skies.⁸

At the Bristol Institution a portrait of Rammohun Roy⁹ was displayed so that people could pay their homage to the departed Indian leader. In the articles which were published in the Bristol press on this occasion, Rammohun Roy was portayed as a most handsome man, six feet high, with well proportioned limbs, lofty forehead, dark and animate eyes, finely curved nose, and large and manly features.¹⁰ On November 14, 1833, the *Bristol Gazette* published a short poem written by Jacques entitled: "Lines suggested on beholding the portrait of the late Raja Rammohun Roy". The poet said:

"I stand before thy painted shade
 And yield thee reverence—'tis thy due,
 Nor may the humblest gift degrade
 The giver, if the motive's true;
 A tear is not all—vainly shed
 Dropt to the memory of the dead.
 Star of the East! whose radiant beam
 Shone even to the utmost West,
 Thy worth demands a loftier theme
 Than this, to thy lov'd name addresst—
 But hearts that boast one spark divine
 Will yield thee homage—this is mine."¹¹

The *Bristol Mirror*, a conservative journal conducted by John Taylor, under the title "Rammohun Roy" described in October 1833 the degeneration of India during the early nineteenth century and the role played by Rammohun Roy to uplift his coun-

7. *Ibid.*8. *Ibid.*

9. Made by J. Briggs.

10. *The Bristol Gazette*, Bristol, October 3, 1833.11. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1833. . .

trymen. According to this newspaper, during this stage of time, people in India had sunk below the level of human beings. They had no shame or realisation of this degradation. On October 19, 1833, the *Bristol Mirror* remarked:

The brightest sun, the darkest shade
And India rich is India poor,
Alas, what her boundless trade,
And what the crowns she wears or wore?
There is a degradation there,
The mind doth chains of bondage wear.
"Twas thine to see—to feel the shame—
Alas, what millions are blind,
Insensible they bear the name,
But man is not their grade or kind.
Dark, vicious, cruel, mean and base,
A groveling, vile and abject race."¹²

Thus the death of Rammohun Roy at Bristol drew the attention of the people not only towards the splendid accomplishments of this "Bright, serene, and unequalled Star"¹³ as the Bristol press described Rammohun Roy, but also towards the miserable degradation of the Indian people. And much before the death of Rammohun Roy cast a shadow of gloom in his motherland, for the news of his death reached India in the beginning of 1834, the people of Bristol had shed countless tears in the memory of this extraordinary individual. Rammohun Roy had risen above the barriers of caste, creed, country and clime, and a realisation of this fact made the people of Bristol feel a sense of personal bereavement. On October 19, 1833, the *Bristol Mirror*, gave expression to the mental agony of the people and their highest regards for Rammohun Roy, when it remarked:

And thou art set-set in the West—
So do the Stars of Heaven decline,
And hallowed be the peaceful rest,
Of one who did so brightly shine,
If worth and talent claim a tear
Rammohun Roy! thou hast it here."¹⁴

12. *The Bristol Mirror*, Bristol, October 19, 1833.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

The Babbar Akali Movement

BY

R. K. PERTI

"Swaraj is the remedy to all grievances" said Mahatma Gandhi and the attainment of this goal was the object of the Babbar Akalis—a group of Sikh revolutionaries who called themselves lion and had imitated the Akali organisation to enlist the sympathy of the people and had adopted the dress of the Akalis partly with the same object and partly as an effective guise. The Babbar Akalis had little genuine interest in the religious side of the Akali movement and had more in common with the Akali conspiracy of 1921, which worked for the murder of officials and prominent loyalists. Having come into existence in 1920, the Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee rallied round them a great following in the *Doab*, i.e., the land between the Sutlej and the Beas rivers and launched a campaign of reforming the *Gurdwaras* and purifying the Sikh rituals. The mahants and the priests, who then controlled the *Gurdwaras*, had fallen from the path of righteousness and were utilising the funds of the *Gurdwaras* for promoting licentiousness and freeing of these places of worship was their first object. Peaceful and constitutional agitation was consequently launched and Sikhs from the *Doab* were recruited in large numbers.

But official apathy to this cause and the negative attitude of the bureaucracy was least desired. The government, taking it to be largely a question of law and order, tried to meet the situation through wholesale repression and systematic persecution. Prosecutions for wearing *kirpans* or swords beyond a certain length and taking over of the keys of the *Toshakhana* of the Golden Temple, Amritsar were the measures initially taken to check the enthusiasm of the Sikhs. Later the Seditious Meetings Act was used vigorously for scuttling any remonstrance. 'The police were the masters of the day and they had a jolly time', wrote a leader. But the last straw that broke the camel's back was the police and mili-

tary excesses on the peaceful and non-violent *jatha* or procession at the 'Guru Ka Bagh'.

Non-violence and cowardice displayed at the 'Guru Ka Bagh', however, created great dissatisfaction amongst the Sikhs of the *Doab*, who still cherished the memories of their courage and bravery. They looked at constitutional agitation with contempt and ridicule and believed that deliverance from this situation could not be achieved through peaceful and legal means. Two *jathas* of strongmen, with an appeal to the sword and a promise for chivalry were, consequently, organised by Master Mota Singh and Karam Singh in the *Doab* in the summer of 1922. Ground for such revolutionary activity had already been prepared in this area by the immigrants, who had returned from Canada in the hope of staging a revolt against the British Government. Though their move made in 1915 had failed, yet their enthusiasm had not languished. They had been receiving large sums of money from their compatriots in the United States and Canada for revolutionary propaganda and purchase of arms.

Master Mota Singh of Patara in the Jullundhur district and Karam Singh of Daulatpur in the Hoshiarpur district were the prominent members of the Akali Conspiracy of 1921. Both of them believed in violence and wanted to make the government immovable by a campaign of murder and terrorism. The organisation of the *jatha* in the Jullundhur district had hardly made any headway when Mota Singh was arrested in June 1922 and the work had fallen on Kishan Singh, a trusted lieutenant of the 'Master'. Kishan Singh was a pensioned Havildar of 2/35th Sikhs from Baring in the Jullundhur district. The two *jathas* worked independently of each other until August 1922 when Kishan Singh and Karam Singh met each other and decided on the merger of the two *jathas*. The leader of this *jatha* was named as *Gargaj* or one who roars and thunders and the minor luminaries were honoured as *Chakravartīs*, while its object was set at stirring up the peasantry and spreading disaffection and hatred against the British Raj. Once the people had been worked up and enough weapons had been procured, it was planned that the people would be asked to revolt.

Appeal to the religious feelings of the Sikhs was made at *Diwans*—meetings ostensibly religious in character, where poems

were recited and speeches calling the government of the day as tyrannical and oppressive were delivered. At these meetings people were encouraged to wear *khaddar*—coarse and hand-spun cloth and not to co-operate with the government generally. They were also asked not to pay land revenue. Memories of past historical events and prowess of the Sikh leaders were recalled and endeavours were made to develop and create a strong antipathy for the British Raj. In reminding the Sikhs of their former sovereignty over the Punjab efforts were made to tamper with the loyalty of which they had given ample proof for over 50 years. Steady propaganda of this nature was sure to influence the Sikhs into a belief that their loyalty had been misplaced and that the time had come to draw the sword against the enemies of the Khalsa and reestablish Sikh rule in the Punjab.

The 'Babbar Akali Doaba', a leaflet in the Gurumukhi script, and an organ of the Babbar Akalis was no less instrumental in spreading their creed. 15 issues of this leaflet appeared between 20 August 1922 and 21 May 1923 and was printed on 'Elam's' duplicator, at first called the *Safri* or 'travelling' press and later the '*Odaru*' or the flying press, which was purchased in Lahore. It was distributed free of charge but its readers were urged to pass on these issues amongst as large a number of people as possible. All issues, except one, had at the beginning a couplet, which when translated meant that only he who fights and dies for his faith would be considered a hero. First two issues of this leaflet were brought out by Karam Singh of Daulatpur and Ude Singh but as they were not to the liking of Kishan Singh, the responsibility for bringing out the later issues devolved on the latter, though Karam Singh of Daulatpur continued to be the editor in name. After the arrest of Kishan Singh, the leaflet was brought out by other members of the *jatha*. The language of the leaflet was coarse and such as would appeal to the masses. It used curious phrases. The word '*Kiba*' was written as '*Bika*' and '*Pindari*' as '*Dopri*'. If 'Great hospital' stood for a special place at Krishnanpura in Hoshiarpur, *Baja* denoted the cyclostyling machine. Each issue was highly seditious, and inflammatory in tone, tending to bring both the Government and the Europeans into contempt by referring to them in terms of foul abuse and vituperations. Hindus, Sikhs and Moham-medans were advised to unite and organise insurrection, wield the dagger, behead the tyrants, "bury the police stations: plunder the

treasuries, place gun powder below the railway lines, commit raids on the magazines, steal arms and sing songs of liberty".¹ Soldiers from the armed forces were also invited to join and plunder the magazines. Loyalists were referred to as *Jholichucks* or toadies, who were running about seeking rewards and Babbar was invited to throw these in their faces. Non-violence, the creed of the Shiro-mani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, was condemned as being contrary to the Sikh temperament, while resort to arms was advocated. 'The Babbar is called to concoct a hot drink, which will counteract the cooling mixture of non-violence' and which might assist the establishment of free government.²

These efforts were quite successful to influence the minds of the Sikhs of the Doab generally. Recruits from amongst these people, armed forces and refugees from justice were sought and arms and ammunition were purchased or collected from diverse sources within India and across the border. People from far off countries as China, Malaya, and America were urged to join the ranks of the Babbar 'for he is embarking on a struggle beyond his capacity and difficult to win'. The strategy of the Babbars was to paralyse the official machinery by persuading the *zaildars*, *Lambardars*, *Thanadars* to stand aloof, failing which they would be socially boycotted. Finally, they were to be intimidated and disgraced and for this purpose razors for chopping off the nose and ears of the *jholichucks* were purchased in Jullundhur Cantonment. There was no plan to murder the *jholichucks* until November 1922, when the government started giving a serious thought to this problem and offered heavy rewards for the arrest of Kishan Singh and other leading Babbar Akalis.

It was then the question of open confrontation and the Babbar Akalis decided on reforming or murdering the loyalists. The Babbars were asked to take a vow that (1) "Every member shall have to murder a *jholichuck*, even if he were his father; (2) every member shall have to fight against enemy, though he may be alone; (3) a member betraying or deserting the *jatha*, turning an

1. Babbar Akali Doaba, 23 August 1922, quoted in *The Tribune*, 3 October 1922.

2. Home—Political, 1926, No. 245 K.W.

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approver after arrest or working as a C.I.D. agent will be shot dead and his house will be burnt with petrol."³

The campaign to intimidate and murder the officials and supporters of the government launched on 22 December 1922 terrified the people of the Doab to an extent that the former threatened to resign from their jobs. None would come forward to rescue the victims, lest the rage of the Babbars might fall on him. They spoke in guarded whispers and many carried pistols and revolvers and some even engaged body-guards. The government labouring under the threat of a serious menace to public safety resorted to indiscriminate arrests of people on very flimsy grounds. Systematic and simultaneous raids in the Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur districts and the Kapurthala state, where Khan Bahadur Abdul Hamid placed the entire resources of the state at the disposal of the government and gave every possible assistance, resulted in the arrest of 71 persons in 39 villages on 22 April 1923, followed by 21 other members of the *jatha*. Arrest of Kishan Singh and a few other die-hards along with a host of sympathisers gave a first serious blow to this organisation and drove its members to the broken country of the Shiwalik Hills, which run through the centre of the Hoshiarpur district. If it made concealment easy, movement of disciplined troops was difficult in this terrain. Recruitment to the ranks of the Babbars came to a standstill and so were the murders and dacoities committed by them. But their sudden descent from the hills and dastardly murder of the headman and his brother in the village of Kaulgarh in the Hoshiarpur district on 20 May 1923 was sufficient to revive the feeling of panic and insecurity in the countryside.

The Government of Punjab had so far attached no political importance to this movement and had regarded it as a conflict between the criminal elements and the forces of law and order. But now it was essential to give this question a fresh thought. The government felt satisfied when it had persuaded the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee to publicly repudiate the campaign of violence preached by the Babbars. To the *Civil and Military Gazette*, a pro-government English daily, it was an act of 'amazing

3. Home—Political, 1923, No. 134/11.

audacity', for it had always felt that the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was secretly connected with the activities of the Babbars. But the government was quite nervous of its position when it was given out that the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee had taken this stand at the instance of the government. This feeling of satisfaction soon led to utter dismay when the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee proceeded to suggest that the sufferings of the people had led certain 'sincere but misguided souls' to take to those methods⁴ and this expression of sympathy could perhaps be attributed to the fear of the Babbar Akalis from which the Sikh leaders suffered.

The Government of Punjab, on its own part, adopted special measures for containing and suppressing this movement. A large number of police constables was recruited and to secure public support against those who harboured or concealed the Babbars, the Babbar Akali Jatha was declared as an unlawful organisation. Further, a considerable body of troops was stationed in the *Doab* to track down the Babbars from the adjoining hills and assistance of aeroplanes was sought to make bi-weekly flights for scattering propaganda leaflets. Punitive Police Post Tax was levied and disciplinary action was taken against civil and military pensioners for harbouring or sympathising the Babbars. These measures of collective punishment, though justified on grounds of expediency, could hardly be vindicated as the people of the *Doab* were not engaged in rioting or seditious propaganda and, they could hardly be appreciated as the government had not declared a general state of disorder or widespread lawlessness as prevailing amongst the people. Nevertheless, they were capable of containing the movement. Arrest of Santa Singh in June 1923 and of Waryam Singh in the Lyallpur district in next January, however, brought this movement to a close, which had at one time been planned to engulf the whole of the Punjab and establish contacts with the Bolsheviks across the border and procure arms and ammunition for spreading it throughout India.

The action of the local officials, as also the method of police investigation, was adversely commented upon in the Sikh and the

4. Home--Political, April 1923, No. 25.

nationalist press,⁵ which was stifled by the rigorous enforcement of the Press Laws. Allegations of widespread police oppression and of indiscriminate arrests were made. Dr. Satya Pal, writing to the *Bande Matram*, an Urdu daily, observed that 'a powerful wave of rigour and repression that is now passing over the Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur Districts to crush the Babbar Akalis has thrown into shade even the memories of the days of martial law... The authorities should put a speedy end to the doings of the Imperial police.'⁶ Similar criticism of handling the situation appeared in the *Loyal Gazette* and the *Gurdwara*, Urdu bi-weeklies, of 27 and 30 May, 1923, while the *Desh Sewak*, a Gurmukhi weekly, of 1 June warned the government against its repressive policy, for it could still further prejudice the people against the government. It also advised the bureaucracy 'to act with patience and courage: its purpose will not be served by the narrow-mindedness it is displaying.' It was further asserted that under the cloak of restoring law and order the bureaucracy was intentionally trying to destroy the Akalis and break the Sikh community, but in doing so it was only undermining its own foundations.⁷ The *Akhbar-i-Am* representing a different viewpoint, however, supported the government and expressed surprise at those who characterised the measures adopted by the government as repressive, for the police was committing no illegal acts and absolutely no repression had been practised on innocent people. To it "If they were not to arrest suspicious persons, they could never proceed with their investigations".⁸

Many an association like the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee appointed separate committees of enquiry and T.A.K. Sherwani of Aligarh planned a visit to Jullundhur to discuss the question of Police atrocities with the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. But the local officials looked at such committees of enquiry with much suspicion and believed that instead of these being a source

5. Home—Political, 1924, No. 15/11; *The Gurdwara*, *Muslim Outlook*, *Bande Matram*, *The Tribune* of 2, 5, 7 May and 9 June 1923.

6. *Bande Matram*, 24 May 1923.

7. *Desh Sewak*, 1 June, 1923.

8. *Akhbar-i-Am*, 7 July 1923.

of help in restoring law and order, they would inflame the passions of the people. They wished to check the attempts of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee—the most formidable body—by resorting to the Seditious Meetings Act. The Government of Punjab, however, favoured its application only as a last resort, as it could have given political complexion to this issue. The Government of India supporting it commented that it should not be used “unless the state of affairs materially deteriorates.... The use of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code has the advantage of enabling the issue to be restricted to pure considerations of law and order and is in this respect preferable so long as it continues to be effective for the purpose immediately in view.”⁹

Despite improvement in the political situation in the *Doab*, the arrest of the members of the committees of enquiry into the sufferings of peaceful and non-violent Sikhs on 12 September, 1923 invited condemnation from the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee as it was a breach of faith and absolute disregard of the most ordinary canons of honesty and fairplay.¹⁰ Doubts were also expressed as to the sincerity of the government in achieving its objects squarely. *The Bande Matram* of 7 June enquired: “Why does the government fear an enquiry and what harm does it suffer thereby? It is not only unjust but also inexpedient to stop such an enquiry.” But what was even still more grave was the procedure of conducting the trial. Holding it outside the District and the Division was taken as an attempt by the government to discourage the defence counsel to produce its witnesses freely, which was now feasible only at exorbitant cost. Further conducting it in jail and that too in camera, where representatives of the Press were excluded from reporting these proceedings freely was critically commented upon. Such an attempt to muzzle the Press was reminiscent of the Middle Ages and it could never inspire public confidence. “It seems that the procedure in these cases is going to be peculiarly novel and unprecedented”, observed *The Nation*. “The cases are ... not going to be tried under any particular emergency law, but will be conducted according to the

9. Government of India to Government of Punjab dated 7 June 1923. Home—Political, 1923. No. 134/11.

10. *The Tribune*, 3 October 1923.

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ordinary Criminal Code. If that is the case we fail to understand why the privileges under the law should not be fully extended to the accused. Justice must precede, nay supersede, all considerations of political necessity, if any. In this case particularly the need of justice is greater when it is remembered that the procedure under which arrests were made and evidence was collected was anything but satisfactory."¹¹ The *Khalsa* of 25 August and *Protap* and *Milap* of 20 August were also unanimous in condemning the procedure of this trial. The *Tribune* commented, "Securing the conviction of the accused persons is not the only thing. The Government must also see that the trial is properly and fairly conducted and the public is convinced of the guilt of the persons found guilty."¹² The *Civil and Military Gazette* was also not happy with the official stand, as it would yield ground to the enemies of the government to spread rumours which could be scotched by full publicity alone.¹³ This criticism no doubt led the government to permit bona-fide representatives to witness these trial proceedings but they were debarred from publishing reports without scrutiny by the court. Imposition of this restriction amounted to clamping of censorship of the Press and was objectionable both in principle and in practice. But as far as the course of the trial was concerned, it remained unaffected. It continued until 28 February, 1925 when J. K. Tapp, Additional Sessions Judge, Lahore, delivered his judgement. Even the petitions for mercy to the Government of India were rejected as this movement was taken to be "one of the most serious menace[s] to public safety and only a very strong case was required for interference."¹⁴

The Babbar Akali movement, which started in a big way was thus by now a completely blown out force and its members had been charged and convicted of criminal conspiracy. It had no faith in terrorism as a means of independence but had been resorted to only as an effective method of retaliation and of securing safety for the Babbar Akalis. It had failed because it had little to appeal to the masses. Its approach was only negative in nature, i.e. to

11. *The Nation*, 16 August 1923.

12. *The Tribune*, 18 August 1923.

13. *The Tribune*, 19 August 1923.

14. *Home—Political*, 1926, No. 245.

throw away the British hegemony and had little constructive programme to inspire confidence in the people at large. But any attempt at calling it as a movement confined to dacoits and criminals alone is unjustified. Dacoits like Dhanna Singh, Waryam Singh of Dujja and Banta Singh of Dhamian were no doubt quite active but there were ex-soldiers and others also, who had absolutely clean record to their credit and were not sorry to see the authority of the government flouted and undermined. The Babbar Akalis were mostly Jat Sikhs and got into its fold from districts like Hoshiarpur, Jullundhur, Gurdaspur, Sialkot and Amritsar and the Indian State of Kapurthala, though majority of them were from the *Doab* only—the major reason being that the returned immigrants from Canada had settled there. The flame of freedom was still burning in them and they did not wish to let it extinguish. Its plan of establishing contacts with the Bolsheviks and of collecting arms for staging simultaneous risings fizzled out because of complete dependence on Bachittar Singh. Once he was arrested for wearing a long sword and subsequently sentenced for 2 years, there was none to execute the plan. Then, it had little support from political parties like the Indian National Congress or the Akali Dal, let alone the Muslim League. This movement yielded little positive results yet it succeeded in manifesting dissatisfaction against the British rule and in stirring up the members of the British House of Commons to criticise the Government of Punjab for attaching too little importance to this movement.¹⁵ It, at the same, strengthened the hands of those, who were fighting the government with the weapons of non-cooperation and non-violence. It also warned the government that its repressive measures would not be condoned, though it was a different thing that the government learnt little from their experience.

15. Hansard's *India Debates*, 1922-23, pp. 248-50.

Gandhi and the Asiatic Registration Act

BY

DR. PAUL HOCKINGS

The text published for the first time here is a digest of an interview given to the Rev. D. A. Rees by Mahatma Gandhi in 1908. It was apparently written in Johannesburg by Mr. Rees on the basis of notes he took while talking with Gandhi, and was then submitted to him for corrections, which appear on the manuscript in Gandhi's own hand. The fourteen pages of Mr. Rees' text were then returned to him by Gandhi, accompanied by his letter of transmittal.

In this text the items headed "Q" are Mr. Rees' questions, and those headed "A" Gandhi's responses. I have omitted certain words that Mr. Rees himself deleted as he wrote, have enclosed the words deleted by Gandhi in square brackets, and have italicized *Gandhi's additions* to the manuscript. The work of each writer is clearly distinguished by his handwriting and ink.

The text is chiefly important for its presentation of factors leading up to Gandhi's jail sentence on January 10, 1908, and for his description of the first assassination attempt on him. The authenticity of the text is assured by the covering letter, signed by M. K. Gandhi. This is dated March 26; and as the text refers to the assault by Mir Alam Khan and other Pathans on February 10, 1908, it must have been written between these two dates.

Much of the discussion concerns the Transvaal's new Asiatic Registration Act (1907), which required that all Asians in the Colony register themselves and supply fingerprints to the government, which would thus know which Asians were lawful residents of the colony. Gandhi refused to comply, and consequently was sentenced (on December 28, 1907) to leave the Colony within 48 hours. This too he refused. Jan Christiaan Smuts, who was Colonial Secretary, was at this time busily arming his government with additional legislation that could be used against Indians in the Transvaal.

On January 10, 1908, Gandhi (along with several other Indian leaders) was sentenced to two months in prison for having ignored the earlier court order. He began the sentence that day; but was escorted to Pretoria on January 30 to confer with General Smuts, and was at the same time formally released from jail. During this conference it was agreed that if Indians were not coerced into registration, and if Indian women were exempted from fingerprinting, Gandhi would see to it that the Indian community would voluntarily present themselves at the registration offices and thereby collaborate with the colonial government. By the time Gandhi corrected Mr. Rees' text in March, over 5,000 Indians had voluntarily registered in Johannesburg (out of a total population of just over 10,000 Transvaal Indians). Despite this strong show of support for Gandhi's position his moral effort was in the long run doomed to failure, for General Smuts did not live up to his word and by the end of 1909 some 8,000 Indians had been compelled to leave the Transvaal and another 2,500 had been imprisoned for failing to comply with the Asiatic Registration Act. The legal position of Indians changed somewhat in 1910, when the Transvaal was absorbed into the Union of South Africa.

The Rev. Rees was a Methodist missionary whose widow retained possession of this manuscript until the nineteen-fifties. More recently it passed briefly through my hands before being auctioned (by Charles Hamilton, Inc.,) in New York in 1965. The text is not included in Vol. VIII of the Government of India's monumental *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, nor is it published elsewhere so far as I can discover.

THE REES TEXT

Q: What number of Indians are there in the Transvaal and from what parts of India do they chiefly come?

A: There are about 13,000. At present the number resident here is only about 8,000; the remaining 5,000 have left in consequence of the Registration Act. Some are in Natal and some in Cape Town but the majority have returned to India. Probably most of them will now return. Those who are resident here have come chiefly from Bombay and Madras, and are mostly general traders or hawkers.

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Q: What is the history of the settlement of Indians in the Transvaal?

A: In 1843,¹ indentured labour was first introduced into Natal. Afterwards it was suspended. Then the prosperity of the Colony declined and in 1853 indentured labour was again resorted to. There was a large Indian settlement in Mauritius, and one of the Bombay Indians there, hearing that Indians did well in Natal came there, bringing with him a large number of his relatives and fellow caste-men. He prospered, and other Indians hearing of this, came on the scene, and so, Indian traders multiplied. When the Transvaal Mines were opened up,² these traders came over from Natal and soon became prosperous. They found that they could trade not only with their own countrymen, but also with the Kaffirs and the Dutch. They found the Dutch trade specially remunerative, and so the number of Indian traders [multiplied]. *increased*.

Q: I have heard it said that you have made special efforts to increase the Indian trading community, and to bring in Indian artisans. Is this true?

A: There is not a vestige of truth in it. I first came into the country in 1893, when things were much as they are now. There were then fully eight or nine thousand Indians in the country. The increase which has since taken place is small, and I have done absolutely nothing to increase the community.

Q: Before the recent Registration law was brought into force, what was the system of registration adopted?

A: There was no registration of the present kind in existence. In 1885, the Dutch Govt. passed a law dealing with immigration, but that law was not intended to restrict the immigration of Indians [or] *but it was meant to place a bar upon their trading*. At one time President Kruger passed a law imposing a prohibitive fee of £ 25 on every Indian who wished to trade in the country. The technical wording of the [ordinance] law was that any Indian desiring to trade should be registered and take out a receipt for

1. This is incorrect: the first Indian labourer reached Natal in 1860, and immigration was suspended in 1866; cf. Natal Blue Book, *Report of the Indian Immigration Commission*, 1909.

2. In 1884.

£ 25. In consequence of representations made by the British Govt. the amount of the fee was subsequently reduced to £ 3. It will be seen that this law simply imposed a *trade tax* on Indian traders, and was not a registration act applicable to Indians as a class.

Q: But is not the present act stated to be an amendment of the old Dutch law to which you refer?

A: Yes, but my conviction is that this [is] *was* done with a view to hoodwink the British public. As a matter of fact the present Act differs in toto from the old Dutch law. That applied only to traders and did not touch the community as a class, this act embraces all, without distinction and aims not simply at registration but also at identification. The old Dutch law did not aim at preventing Indian emigration, neither did it concern itself with identification. It merely required that all traders should register and contribute to the revenue by paying a specified fee.

Q: What is the system of permits and how long has it been in force?

A: After the [last British occupation of the Transvaal] *conclusion of peace* an ordinance was passed to take the place of the procedure adopted under martial law, when every resident was more or less under supervision. To replace martial law an ordinance called "the Peace Preservation ordinance" was passed. The preamble states that it was passed to check the entry of people of a dangerous character, who would be a menace to peace and good government, that is to say it was aimed at disloyalists. But [recently] *later* when a cry was raised against the immigration of Indians this ordinance was effectively applied to that end.

When the ordinance was passed it was designed to guard against the influx of undesirable people, but permits were granted freely to any British Subject of whose good character they were satisfied, and to foreigners who could produce certificates from their Consuls. But since this agitation against Indians has arisen they have been singled out for exceptional treatment, and required to give elaborate proof that they were in the country before the war, before a permit is granted.

Q: It has been stated that there had arisen a widespread traffic in the permits issued to Indians, and that there was an

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illicit influx of Asiatics, on an organised scale which alarmed the authorities and necessitated the introduction of this severe measure. Is this true?

A: This charge was made against our community and we approached the authorities and asked them for proofs. This they could not or would not give. I admit that there was a [a considerable] *some* traffic in permits going on, [and with the knowledge of the community], but behind the traffic, and regulating and profiting by it were the officials of the Government. The real facts are these—after the conclusion of peace a considerable number of Europeans from the Volunteers were taken on by the Government and placed in positions of trust and responsibility. It is not surprising that many proved themselves utterly unfitted for positions for which they had no previous training, and that [many] *some* proved utterly untrustworthy. Several men of this class were appointed as supervisors of Asiatics. They were given tremendous powers and they held the physical destiny of Indians in their hands. They did not scruple to take full advantage of their positions for their own enrichment. They inaugurated a regular system of traffic in permits, and either granted or transferred them at rates varying from £ 10 to £ 30. Where the carcass is, there the crows will gather, and when it became known that permits could be obtained, for a consideration, Indians [flocked] *came* to the Transvaal from Durban, Port Elisabeth, Cape Town and elsewhere. *Many of these had a perfect right to re-enter but had to buy their permits.*

Q: But why did not the respectable leaders of your Community endeavour to stop the traffic?

A: They did. When I returned from India in 1902 I found the traffic in full swing. I then warned my fellow country-men of what would be the results if the traffic was not stopped. I came from India at that time specially to meet Mr. Joseph Chamberlain,³ [and this was one of the questions I discussed with him]. I brought the matter to the notice of Sir Arthur Lawley but he would not listen or he trusted his officers. Three times I approached him with a view to stopping this abuse, and on the third occasion I

3. Then on a visit to South Africa.

produced such proof that enquiry was made and two officials were discharged on a technicality, but the evidence before Government was so clear, that both officers were dismissed the service. This illicit traffic had to be stopped, but it could have been done effectively without the legislation recently introduced. The authors of the malpractice, the active agents in carrying it out, and those who profited by it were these corrupt officials, but instead of using the power which existing laws placed at their disposal for dealing with [them] *the evil*, [they] *the Govt.* introduced an act directed against the whole Indian community.

Q: I gather then that you regard this registration act as unnecessary and based on assumptions which are untrue.

A: Certainly. It proceeds on the assumption that every Indian has entered the country fraudulently and [therefore that] treats his permit as invalid, until he rehabilitates himself by producing before the registrar, evidence of his bona fides, which he can accept. It invalidates totally the Dutch registration Certificates, for which a fee of £ 3 was paid, although it professes to be in harmony with the law under which those certificates are granted. It assumes that Turkish Mahomedans are less trustworthy than Turkish Christians & Jews for it exempts the two latter classes from the provisions of the Act. Thus for these, and other reasons, it has deeply offended [not only] *both* Hindus but Mahomedans.

Q: What other objections have you to urge against the Act?

A: First, it curtails our liberty in such a manner that no self-respecting man, who has faith in God, could submit to it. A man may, voluntarily, and for the benefit of his community, submit to many restrictions, but in this case, the community gains nothing. If any man submitted it would be solely for the sake of gaining money. Secondly, the distinction made between Turkish Mahomedans and Turkish Christians and Jews is most invidious. They all come from the same social class and in many cases the Christians and Jews *from Turkey* are far lower in the social scale, yet they are exempted from the provisions of the act. Is it to be wondered at that the Mahomedans feel aggrieved? Throughout the history of Colonial Government legislation, the Government have set their face firmly against class legislation except under very [exceptional]

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extraordinary circumstances. The Australian Emigration Act was vetoed by Mr. Chamberlain⁴ because it was class legislation. He would not allow *the late* Mr. Escombe the Premier of Natal to pass an act against Asiatics and he advised the Natal Ministry to introduce a general act, dealing with the evils they sought to remove not on the basis of colour, or religion, but on general grounds. Yet the Imperial Government agreed to this Act which I regard as class legislation of a most virulent type.

Other objectionable features of the Act are the following. Children under eight years have to be registered by their parents under a heavy penalty. Those over eight years have to be taken before the Registrar and give all identification particulars required of them. On attaining the age of 16, they have to appear again before the Registrar and take out Certificates. I can only describe this as scientific torture.

Again, the method of identification adopted is the one pursued for the identification of criminals, in this country. Not absolutely free men have ever been required to submit to such a process hitherto. I may mention that *probably* in order to remove the objection which we Indians feel, [it has recently been ruled that all emigrants shall henceforth give the prints of their ten digits.] *digit impressions have been made of general application under the Immigration Act.* This it is said will apply to Europeans as well as others, but this is manifestly an afterthought and I doubt if it will be *largely* enforced.

You will not therefore be surprised that when the Act was passed, the Indians met and took a solemn oath that they would not submit to such a law.

Q: What steps were taken to make the authorities acquainted with your objections to the Act?

A: The measure was published only a few days before it was to come on for discussion. Immediately representatives of the Indian community sought an interview with Mr. Patrick Duncan the Colonial Secretary and I personally saw Sir Richard Solomon.⁵

4. Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary (1895-1900).
5. Formerly (1903) acting Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal.

Mr. Duncan informed the deputation that they could discuss with him the details of the measure but not the principles, as the Government were committed to them. The Indians then presented a petition to the Legislative Assembly. That was pigeon holed and the law was passed, as it stood, with one important alteration. The draft measure applied to Indian women as well as men. This will show you how far they were prepared to go and how little those who drafted the Act understood Indian sentiment.

The measure was passed, then came the meeting in the Empire Theatre, when the Community took an oath of passive resistance. A deputation was appointed to go to London to interview Lord Elgin. When they reached London they met with much sympathy from Anglo-Indians and the Press, including the Times, supported their cause. Lord Elgin was alarmed, and said that after hearing all the facts, he could not agree to the act as it then stood, and accordingly it was then vetoed. Then [representative] *responsible* government was granted, and their first act was to re-introduce this measure word for word. The passing of the measure through both the houses of the legislature occupied *about* 48 hours. We Indians again petitioned, appealed by telegraph to the Home authorities interviewed General Smuts but all was of no avail. The measure received the Royal Assent. The Indian Community again met and re-affirmed their vow of non-compliance, and since then passive resistance has been going on. The registration offices were opened but only 500 Indians submitted.

Q: What was the next step taken by Government?

A: The Government then passed the *Im[E]migrants Restriction Act*. This act was of general application, but two clauses were incorporated in order to meet passive resisters. Under the Registration Act Indians who did not submit to its requirements could be sent to jail for two years with hard labour, but under the *Im[E]migration Act*, all Indians who did not submit to registration could be physically deported at their own cost, their chattels, if any, being sold to defray expenses. The second clause provided that those Indians who were resident here, but did not submit to the law, no matter of what standing they were, became "*prohibited Im[E]migrants*" and therefore subject to deportation.

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This measure instead of unmanning the Indians nerved them for further struggle and they informed the Government that they would suffer deportation, and confiscation of property, but would not violate their conscience and break their oath. Those Indians who could not stand the stress of the struggle went out of the country, Many sold out their businesses, others who remained here countermanded their orders for further supplies of goods, while yet others sold out and remained, living on their capital, in order to carry on the struggle. The Government resorted to all kinds of methods to influence the Indians into compliance. They dismissed their Indian employees in the post offices, railways, and other departments, and these in nearly every case accepted their dismissal rather than comply with the Act. Then followed imprisonment and nearly 200 Indians, including myself and most of the leaders were put in jail, and the licences of traders were stopped. The utmost firmness was manifested by all classes of the Community and even women came forward and held meetings and informed Government that they were fully prepared to follow their husbands.

Q: What kind of treatment did you receive in prison?

A: The jail authorities did their best for us, but the treatment can only be described as inhuman. We were treated as common felons and were put on a diet to which Indians are altogether unaccustomed, with the result that we were practically starved. For breakfast we were given [mealy] *mealie* meal, which is a porridge, all right for the natives of this country who have always been used to it, but to us it was most distasteful. Many refused it altogether, others who took it rather than starve suffered from dysentery &c. In response to a petition, we were allowed four ounces of bread in lieu of the meal. This we had to eat without tea or coffee, only water was allowed. For dinner we had four ounces of rice and one ounce of ghee. For supper we were given eight ounces of bread three times a week, and three times we had haricot beans, without any accompaniment. On Sundays we could have had meat if we desired, but as Hindus do not eat meat and Mahomedans cannot eat it unless the animals have been slain according to their own formula, the meat was not accepted. In place of this we were allowed a double quantity of vegetables. Asiatic prisoners are

classed with natives. I do not object to this, but I claim that they should be supplied with food according to their customs.

The accommodation also was very bad. The jail *where were housed* has provision for only 51 [Asiatic] prisoners, but when I was there, 151 had to be dealt with.⁶ Tents were erected on an open space which provided sleeping accommodation for one hundred, but during the day time the whole 151 were crowded into a small yard, with the result that *almost every day some fainted away at the time of inspection.*⁷

Q: What is the nature of the compromise ultimately effected?

A: The Government accepted our offer of voluntary registration according to [the] *a* form ultimately agreed to. This offer had been made before the act was brought into [force] *operation* and if it had been accepted then, all subsequent evil might have been avoided.

By mutual agreement, the form of registration has been altered. If any man has scruples against giving his ten digits, he may give only his thumb mark. The Pathans have done this and most of the Chinese. Personally, I have registered and given the prints of my ten digits. I did this for the sake of example and to show that while I would *voluntarily* do anything [they liked voluntarily] [anyth] *not intrinsically* bad I would do nothing by coercion. *The whole objection was against the spirit of the act.*

We have received the distinct assurance of Government that if the bulk of the Indian Community voluntarily register the act will be repealed. There are sections of the Act which apply to Indians subsequent to their registration, these will become a dead letter.

Registration on these terms is now going on rapidly and I anticipate that nearly all our community will comply.

6. Actually 161; cf. *Indian Opinion*, March 14, 1908.

7. Fuller details of prison conditions were published in *Indian Opinion*, March 7, 14, 21 and 28, 1908.

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Q: How was the settlement brought about?

A: The settlement was brought about largely through the intervention of Mr. Cartwright⁸ the Editor of the Transvaal Leader. He knew me personally in London and was in touch with General Smuts. Having reason to believe that Government would be open to accept the original offer of voluntary registration, he came to me in the jail, and asked if we were still prepared to abide by our original proposal. We said we were. He then produced a draft letter which he had written to General Smuts embodying the proposal, and this letter with a few corrections I signed. After consultation with the leaders of the progressive party, and obtaining their consent, General Smuts sent for me. I left the jail, under police escort, for Pretoria and there discussed the whole matter with General Smuts. I returned the same day at 10-45 p.m. and at a meeting of our Community held at midnight, I informed them of the settlement offered and strongly urged them to accept it. *The finger prints was an open question & all authorised me to accept the finger prints in the modified form.* All accepted it except the Pathans, about one hundred and fifty in number. The next day all the prisoners were released.⁹

Q: What led to the murderous assault upon you?

I have already stated that at the meeting held after my return from Pretoria the Pathans refused to agree to the [compromise.] *finger prints*. At a meeting held subsequently,¹⁰ they still protested and used threats. I endeavoured to show them that the compromise was an honourable one. We did not object to registration but to coercion and I expressed my determination to be the first to present myself at the registration office. The Pathans threatened that the first Indian who attended for registration & *to give finger prints* would be killed. Disregarding this threat [I & other] *many others* & I set out¹¹ for the registration office and on the way, I was set upon by some Pathans, who aimed a blow at me, which was intend-

8. Albert Cartwright; for his role in the affair, cf. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 8, p. 541.

9. January 31, 1908.

10. Johannesburg, February 2, 1908.

11. February 10, 1908.

ed to be fatal. It missed its mark but I received a severe gash on my face, and was rendered unconscious. When I recovered I refused to bring a charge against my assailants, but the Government took the case up, and two Pathans received three months imprisonment with hard labour. Since then the Pathans themselves have registered, giving their *single* thumb prints, and I believe that everything will now work harmoniously. *I do not blame the Pathans. To them finger prints was the law. They could as they did [do] register without finger prints. Suspicious by nature they could not understand why I should give ten digit prints.*

A Report of the First Session of the Indian National Congress*

BY

SACHHIDANANDA BHATTACHARYYA

Much has been written on the persons and circumstances connected with the origin and foundation of the Indian National Congress. What, however, matters most is the fact that the Indian National Congress met for the first time in Bombay and held its first session there for three days from the 28th December, 1885. The delegates, who were called representatives, came at their own expense from different parts of India, arrived on the 27th December at the Congress site and held amongst themselves informal discussions in the course of which a decision was probably made as to who should be the President and the order of proceedings for the next three days was settled. The Bombay Presidency Association acted as hosts and "gratuitously" provided the representatives, who came from outside, during their stay in Bombay for the Congress session, with "everything they needed, carriage, accommodation, food, etc."

"The Indian National Congress held its first session in the hall of Gokuldas Tejpal College on the 28th December, 1885. About one hundred persons attended the meeting. Of them a considerable number were Government servants, such as. D. S. White, President of the Eurasian Association, Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao, Deputy Collector of Madras, Hon'ble M. G. Ranade, Judge, Small Causes Court, Poona, Lala Baijnath of Agra, Prof. A. V. Kathawatha of Ahmedabad, Prof. K. Sundararaman of Arcot, Mr. T. Narasimha Iyer of Tiruvellur and Prof. R. G. Bhandarkar of the Deccan College who, with the exception of the Hon'ble M. G. Ranade, did not take any part in the discussions, but attended only as *Amici Curiae*, to listen and advice."

*The above account is based on the very rare Report of the First National Congress, a copy of which is preserved in the Library of the All India Congress Committee, New Delhi.

The actual representatives numbered 71 and were as follows:

Karachi (2)—Messrs. Dayaram Jethmal and Ooderan Moolchand, Merchants.

Viramgaum (1)—Mr. Harilal Mayaram, Vakil, Municipal Commissioner and representative of *Loka Samgraha Sabha*.

Surat (6)—Messrs. H. H. Dhruva, Pleader and Municipal Commissioner; Pallanji Kaikabad, Hony. Secr. *Praja Hitwardhak Sabha*; Goculdas Bhaidas Vakil, Municipal Commissioner and Pleader; M. Jiwanram, B.A., LL.B., Pleader; Hosangji Burjorji, B.A., LL.B., Pleader; and Parshotamdas, Merchant and Vice-President of *Praja Hitwardhak Sabha*.

Poona (8)—Rao Bahadur Krishnaji Laksman Nulkar, Chairman, *Poona Sarbojanik Sabha*; Messrs. G. B. Mashke, Pleader, Sitaram Hari Chiplonkar, Hony. Secy., *Poona Sarbojanik Sabha* and Editor of the Sabha's *Quarterly Journal* Ramachandra; Moreswar Same, Marathi Editor of the *Dhyan Prakash*; Sivaram Hari Sathe, Secy. *Poona Sarbojanik Sabha*; Dr. Pandurang Gopal, c.c., m.c.; Mr. W. Shivaram Apte, M.A., Principal, Fergusson College; R. K. Limayi, Pleader; G. C. Agarkar, Professor, Fergusson College and Editor, the *Maratha* and the *Kesari*.

Calcutta (3)—Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, Bar-at-Law and Standing Counsel; Messrs. Girijabhusan Mukherjee, Vakil and Editor, *Nababhivakar* and Norendranath Sen, Editor, *Indian Mirror*.

Agra (2)—Babu Jamnadas, Pleader and Municipal Commissioner and Babu Prabhu D. Chowdhury, Pleader.

Benares (1)—Babu Ramkali Chowdhury, Retd. Sub-Judge.

Simla (1)—Mr. A. O. Hume.

Lucknow (3)—Munshi Gangaprasad Varma, Proprietor of the *Hindusthani*; Pranwath Pandit, Teacher, Canning College; Munshi Jwala Prashad, Pleader, Umballa; Babu Murlidhar, Pleader, representative of the *Tribune*.

Lahore (1)—Satyananda Agnihotri, Brahmo Missionary.

Allahabad (1)—J. Ghosal, Editor, *Indian Union*.

Ahmedabad (2)—K. Matilal, Vakil and Municipal Commissioner and M. P. Mody, Vakil, Secy. *Gujarat Sabha*.

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Bombay (18)—Hon'ble Dadabhai Naoroji, Member, Legislative Council; Hon'ble K. T. Telang, C.I.E.; Pheroazshah Mehta, Bar-at-Law, Chairman, Bombay Municipal Corporation; Dinshaw Edulji Wacha, Secy., Bombay Presidency Association; D. P. Kanga, Solicitor; G. N. Nadkarni, Vakil; N. B. Barbhoya, Solicitor; T. M. Nathubhoy; J. B. Wacha, Merchant; Rahimtulla M. Sayani, Solicitor; B. M. Wagh, Bar-at-Law; A. K. Sethna, Bar-at-Law; B. M. Malabari, Editor, *Indian Spectator*; G. R. Kirloskar, Vakil; S. Vithal, Vakil; Abdalla Mehrali Dharamsi, Solicitor; J. W. Yajnik, Merchant and N. G. Chandravarkar, Editor, *Indu Prakash* and Bombay Delegate to England.

Madras (8)—P. R. Naidu, Vakil, President, Madras Mahajan Sabha and Municipal Commissioner; Hon'ble S. Subramaniya Aiyar, Vakil and Member, Legislative Council; P. Ananda Charlu, Vakil; G. Subramaniya Aiyar, Editor, the *Hindu*, M. Viraraghavachariar, Sub-Editor, the *Hindu* and Secy., Mahajan Sabha; M. S. Mudaliar, Merchant and Municipal Commissioner; M. E. Srirangachariar, Vakil and Dr. S. V. Athalye, Medical Practitioner.

Berhampore (1)—M. Viswanath Aiyar, Pleader and Municipal Commissioner.

Masulipatam (1)—S. Venkata Subba Rayadu, Vakil.

Tanjore (2)—S. A. Swaminath Aiyar, Public Prosecutor and N. Narayanswami Aiyar, Landholder.

Chinglepet (1)—M. Y. Ramanujachariar, Pleader.

Kumbakonam (1)—K. Pattabhiram Aiyar, Landholder.

Madura (1)—P. S. Aiyar.

Tinnevelly (1)—Peter Paul Pillay, Landholder and School Master.

Coimbatore (1)—S. P. Narasimha Naidu, Journalist.

Salem (1)—K. Pant.

Cuddapah (1)—M. Nageswara Row, Pleader.

Anantapore (1)—P. K. Pillay, Pleader and Member, Local Board.

Bellary (1)—A. Sabapathy Mudaliyoor, Merchant and Chairman, Bellary Municipality.

The first formal open session of the Indian National Congress began at 12 noon on 28th December, 1885. There was no inaugural address by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, as no such dignitary appears to have existed. The first person to open the proceedings was Mr. A. O. Hume who proposed the election of Mr. W. C. Bonnerji to be the President. The proposal having been seconded by Hon'ble Mr. Subramania Aiyar of Madras and supported by Mr. K. T. Telang of Bombay, Mr. W. C. Bonnerji took the chair. None of these speeches is on record.

The President then delivered his address. He called the Congress Session the first National Assembly ever yet convened in India." He claimed that the Congress had a 'representative character' as not only were all the important centres of India represented and the delegates assembled there, though not formally elected by the people, could readily "claim to be the representatives of the people on account of their community of sentiments, community of feelings and community of wants".

The President then proceeded to define the objects of the Congress as, *first*, the promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in different parts of the Empire; *secondly*, the eradication by direct friendly intercourse of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unit that had their origin in the reign of Lord Ripon; *thirdly*, the authoritative record of the opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the important and pressing social questions of the day; and *fourthly*, the determination of the lines upon, and the methods by which, during the next twelve months, it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interest.

Regarding the allegation that the Congress was a nest of conspirators and disloyalists, the President not only denied it but declared that, as a matter of fact "there were no more thoroughly loyal and consistent well-wishers of the British Government than were himself and the friends around him." He claimed that the

procedure of the Congress was "strictly consistent with the British Constitution". He agreed that Britain had done much for India by giving her order, railways and "the inestimable blessing of Western education", but he observed "a great deal still remained to be done". In conclusion the President declared that the desire of the Congress that India "is to be governed according to the ideas of government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their thorough loyalty to the British Government. All that they desired was that the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it".

At the conclusion of the address which, though short, was so business-like and precise that it was received with loud applause. Telegrams of sympathy were then read.

Mr. G. Subramaniya Aiyar, Editor of *The Hindu* of Madras then moved the first resolution:

(That this Congress earnestly recommends that the promised enquiry into the working of the Indian Administration, here and in England, should be entrusted to a Royal Commission, the people of India being adequately represented thereon, and evidence taken both in India and in England.

In moving the Resolution Mr. Aiyar pointed out that in the days of the Company's administration there were at twenty years' intervals enquiries by Parliamentary Commissions into the condition of India which brought out various defects in the Company's Government and often led to their removal by subsequent Parliamentary action, but since the assumption of the Government of India by the Crown of England in 1858 such enquiries had ceased and the Parliament could hardly know anything of the progressive deterioration of the condition of the people in India. The Parliament had taken control in theory, but had in fact abandoned it to the Secretary of the State and his Council. He appealed to "justice and fairness of the English people" and asked for an enquiry into facts by a Royal Commission including some Indians. In seconding the Resolution Mr. Phirozshah Metha emphasized the importance of the enquiry being conducted by Royal Commission with adequate representation of Indians, because it

must not be an enquiry by "Anglo-Indians sitting in judgment on themselves". Mr. Norendranath Sen supported the Resolution and observed that the enquiry recommended would be a sort of stock-taking, after twenty-seven years, of direct Government by the Crown. After a lively debate the Resolution was declared carried.

Thus ended the proceedings of the first day's sitting of the first Indian National Congress.

The proceedings of the second day of the Congress commenced with the moving by Mr. S. H. Chiplonkar of Poona the Second Resolution which ran as follows:

That this Congress considers the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, as at present constituted, the necessary preliminary to all other reforms.

In moving the Resolution Mr. Chiplonkar said that the India Council, as it was then constituted of retired Anglo-Indians, was unnecessary, because it 'interferes too much in all matters of details', 'has no substantial power' and has not helped in the progress and development of India as even in Ceylon, which is administered by the Ministry for Colonies without any such Council. "Abolish the India Council and let the Secretary of State for India direct the Government of this country on the same principles on which the Secretary of State for the Colonies governs Ceylon; and you will soon observe a change for the better coming over India."

Mr. Ananda Charlu, in seconding the Resolution, described the India Council as "an oligarchy of fossilised Indian administrators" who were 'powerless' because the Secretary of State was not bound to follow their advice. The Council, he said, had failed as an experiment and its abolition was a primary condition of all other reforms.

In supporting the Resolution Mr. J. Ghosal declared "we want to take the work of administration more and more into our hands as far as it is compatible with the Imperial policy of the British Government. We cannot, however, expect this reform and a change to the fiscal policy of the country, until the India Council is abolished."

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At this stage Mr. Rahimtullah Sayani enquired if the abolition of the India Council would not turn the Secretary of State into a "perfect autocrat". In reply Mr. Subba Rao observed that the Secretary of State was an autocrat, inspite of the India Council, because the latter was not a representative body and Mr. Sabapathi Mudaliyar added that the abolition of the India Council was necessary as a measure of economy as its abolition will lead to a 'large saving to the public revenue'. The Resolution was then put to the vote and declared carried.

The Hon'ble Mr. K. T. Telang then moved the third resolution which ran as follows:

That this Congress considers the reform and expansion of the Supreme and existing Local Legislative Councils by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members (and the creation of similar Councils for the N.W. Provinces and Oudh, and also for Punjab) essential; and holds that all Budgets should be referred to these Councils for consideration, their members being moreover empowered to interpellate the Executive in regard to all branches of the administration; and that a Standing Committee of the House of Commons should be constituted to receive and consider any formal protests that may be recorded by majorities of such Councils against the exercise by the Executive of the power, which would be vested in it, of over-ruling the decision of such majorities.

It was the most closely debated Resolution and as many as eight speeches were delivered on it. The debate was long enough to be carried over to the next (the third) day.

In moving the third Resolution Hon'ble Mr. K. T. Telang stressed the importance of having elected members in the existing legislative bodies and the necessity for Legislative Councils in the N.W. Provinces and in the Punjab, suggested indirect election to the various legislative councils and emphasized the importance of securing for the legislative bodies the right of considering the budget and the power of interpellations. He declared that as a result of the adoption of these principles "the whole administration will be popularised and friction between the rulers and the ruled minimised."

Hon'ble Mr. S. Subramaniya Aiyar seconded the Resolution and observed that the existing Legislative Councils "at no time possessed a representative character" and their members might occasionally succeed in getting some detail of a legislative measure altered with the good-will of the Executive, but they "could not modify in any way the *principles* of Government or legislative measures which were previously determined by the Government behind the back of the Legislative Councils".

Supporting the Resolution Hon'ble Dadabhai Naoroji, who had recently been nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council by Lord Reary, the Governor of Bombay, observed that Indians being British subjects, representation in the Legislative Councils was "what we can demand and what we are entitled to and expect at British hands as their greatest and most noble institution and heritage. It is our inheritance also and we should not be kept out of it." He pointed out that even after the introduction of this reform granting popular representation and the rights of interpellation and receiving the Budget for discussion, "there will be one essential difference between the British Parliament and the Indian Legislative Councils. In Britain if the Government is defeated in Parliament, it resigns and the Opposition comes into power. That cannot be done in India. Whether defeated or not, the Government will remain in power. Moreover, the Secretary of State for India will have the power to veto, and no harm can happen. If the Government, either Provincial or Supreme, disregard the vote against it, and if the Secretary of State supports the disregarding Government, there will be as the last remedy the Standing Committee of the Parliament as the ultimate appellate body to decide on the point of disagreement; and thus the Parliament will truly, and not merely nominally become the final controlling authority". Having thus tried to disarm all British objection Mr. Naoroji proceeded to appeal to British law and British generosity. "We are", he observed, "British subjects and subjects of the Gracious Sovereign who has pledged her royal word that we are to her as all her other subjects, and we have a right to all British institutions. If we are true to ourselves and perseveringly what we desire the British people are the very people on earth who will give us what is right and just. For what has already been done in the past we have ample reasons to indulge in this belief. Let us for the

future equally rely on that character and instinct of the British. They have taught us our wants and they will supply them."

A discussion followed in the course of which Mr. K. L. Kulkar (Poona) suggested that the Resolution should go further and ask for the right of election to the India Council. The Hon'ble Mr. M. G. Ranade who, in spite of his position as an official, took part in the discussions suggested that in order to strengthen the hands of the Secretary of State the Resolution should ask that his Council should consist partly of elected and partly of nominated members. Mr. Narendranath Sen held that a Standing Committee of the House of Commons would be good, if we had representatives of our own in the House.

In the second speech Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji met all the above objections by pointing out the small part that the Council of the Secretary of State could play in influencing him, who was really a despot subject only to the control of the Parliament and that a Standing Committee would be more effective, as it would be independent of all parties and its decision would be no defeat of the Government, but only a final award on a point of difference between the representatives of the people on the one hand the Government on the other. India would then have one effective Parliamentary control. Mr. Naoroji then concluded with the very significant declaration that "the chief work of this the first National Congress of India is to enumerate clearly and boldly our highest and ultimate wishes. Whether we get them or not immediately, let our rulers know what our highest aspirations are. If we lay down clearly that we desire to have the actual Government of India transferred from England to India under the simple controlling power of the Secretary of State and Parliament, through its Standing Committee, and that we further desire that all taxation and legislation shall be imposed here by representative Councils, we say what we are aiming at."

Before putting the Resolution to the vote the President observed that "it was not at all unreasonable to look forward to a time when in the Government of India there should be Ministries and change of Ministries as in the Colonies," though it is not provided in the Resolution with which it is not, however, inconsistent.

The Resolution was then carried unanimously.

The Fourth Resolution ran as follows:

That in the opinion of this Congress the competitive examination now held in England, for first appointments in various civil departments of the public service, should henceforth, in accordance with the views of the India Office Committee of 1860, be held simultaneously one in England and one in India, both being as far as practicable identical in their nature, and those who compete in both countries being finally classified in one list according to merit, and that the successful candidates in India should be sent to England for further study, and subjected there to such further examinations as may seem needful. Further, that all other first appointments (excluding peonships, and the like) should be filled by competitive examinations held in India, under conditions calculated to secure such intellectual, moral and physical qualifications as may be decided by Government to be necessary. Lastly, that the maximum age of candidates for entrance into the Covenanted Civil Service be raised to no less than 23 years:

In moving the above Resolution Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji justified it, first, by a reference to the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, in both of which the equality of rights for Indians in the services had been proclaimed and promised; and secondly, by ascribing the extreme poverty of India to the inordinate employment of British personnel in the Government of the country and the consequential material loss and drain from the country.

Mr. Girijabhusan Chakraborty, Vakil, Calcutta, seconded the Resolution and quoted with telling effect the following extract from a confidential Minute of Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India (1876-1880): "The Act of Parliament is so undefined and indefinite obligation imposed on the part of the Government of India towards its native subjects are so obviously dangerous that no sooner was the Act passed than the Government began to devise means for practically evading the fulfilment of it. Under the terms of the Act, which are studied and laid to heart by that increasing class of educated Natives whose development the Gov-

ernment encourages without being able to satisfy the aspirations of its existing member, every such Native, if once admitted to Government employment in a post previously reserved to the Covenanted Service, is entitled to expect and claim appointment in the fair course of promotion to the highest posts in that Service. We all know that these desires and expectations never can, or will, be fulfilled. We have had to choose between prohibiting them or cheating them; and we have chosen the least straightforward course. The application to Natives of the competitive examination system as conducted in England, and the recent reduction in the age at which candidates can compete, are all so many deliberate and transparent subterfuges for stultifying the Act and reducing it to a dead letter. Since I am writing confidentially, I do not hesitate to say that both the Governments of England and India appear to me, up to the present moment, unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken away means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they had uttered to the ear".

The fourth Resolution was then put and carried.

The fifth Resolution ran as follows:

That in the opinion of this Congress the proposed increase in the military expenditure of the Empire is unnecessary; regard being had to the revenues of the Empire and the existing circumstances of the country, excessive.

In moving the above Resolution Mr. Rangiah Naidu showed that the military expenditure which was £11,463,000 in 1857 had risen to £16,975,750, that is to say, by five million pounds in 1884 and a further increase of two million pounds was proposed for 1885. Hence a halt in its increase was urgently and immediately essential. Mr. D. E. Wacha seconded the Resolution in a very informative speech showing that the increase in the military expenditure was mainly due to the higher and exorbitant charges imposed by the War Office in England for the British recruits to the Indian Army, a large part of which was kept in Great Britain for 'home defence'. Further exorbitant transport and other similar charges, which were not paid by any of the Colonies were imposed upon India. The result was that the military

charges amounted to 39.25 per cent of the net revenue of India and was too high for a poor country like India and deserved to be reduced immediately.

Mr. Dayaram Jethmal seconded the Resolution with the observation that the prevailing peaceful condition all over India and the existing friendly relation with Afghanistan which was sure to be a definite obstacle to the apprehended Russian aggression, there was no need for increasing the strength of the army necessitating increased expenditure on it. Mr. Jethmal declared that instead of trusting on the army the Government should trust in the policy of spreading education among the people, for "educated Indians are the true and real supporters of the British Government in India".

The Resolution was put and carried.

The Sixth Resolution affirmed:

That in the opinion of this Congress, if the increased demands for military expenditure are not to be, as they ought to be, met by retrenchment, they ought to be met, firstly, by the re-imposition of the Customs duties, and secondly, by the extension of the licence-tax to those classes of the community, official and non-official, at present exempted from it, care being taken that in the case of all classes a sufficiently high taxable minimum be maintained. And further, that this Congress is of opinion that Great Britain should extend an imperial guarantee to the Indian debt.

The Resolution was moved by Mr. J. Y. Yajnik, Merchant, Bombay, who urged that if military expenditure could not be diminished it should be met by the re-imposition of the import duties, especially on cotton textiles which had been abolished in the interest of Lancashire during the administration of Lord Lytton to the great harm of the nascent Indian textile industry. The Resolution which was seconded by Mr. S. A. Swaminatha Aiyar, Public Prosecutor of Tanjore, was put and carried.

The Seventh Resolution stated:

That this Congress deprecates the annexation of Burma and considers that if the Government unfortunately decide on annexation, the entire country of Burma should be separated from

the Indian Viceroyalty and constituted as Crown Colony, as distinct in all matters from the Government of this country, as is Ceylon."

The Resolution which was duly proposed, seconded, put and carried, showed the prescience of the early Congressmen. Had it been accepted and acted upon by the British Government, the Indian taxpayer would have been spared the burden of meeting the heavy deficit that the administration of Burma incurred for more than half a century and the Indians who were encouraged to go and settle there in order to develop that province would have been spared the serious physical and material losses to which they were subjected. Burma was separated from India in 1935 in the interest of Great Britain.

The eighth Resolution ran as follows:

That the Resolution passed by this Congress be communicated to the Political Associations in each province, and that these Associations be requested with the help of similar bodies and other agencies within their respective provinces to adopt such measures as they may consider calculated to advance the settlement of the various questions dealt with in these resolutions.

This Resolution, which was duly carried, aimed at carrying the message of the Congress all through the country. It ushered in that campaign for organisation which eventually led the establishment of Congress Committees all over the country, making the Indian National Congress the mouthpiece of Indian nationalism.

The ninth Resolution which stated

That the Indian National Congress re-assemble next year in Calcutta, and sit on Tuesday, the 28th December, 1886, and the next succeeding days, was moved by Mr. A. O. Hume and was carried with loud acclamations.

Votes of thanks to the Organisers and to the President were proposed and carried with acclamations. The President then called for three *cheers* for Mr. A. O. Hume. After acknowledging the honour thus shown to him Mr. Hume proposed, on the principle of better late than never, "the giving of cheers, and that not only three, but three times three and if possible, thrice that for one the latchest of whose shoes he was unworthy to loose,

one to whom they were all dear, to whom they were all children her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen Empress. The House burst out in a storm of applause and the cheers were given with vehemence and enthusiasm".

The first Indian National Congress then dissolved, "leaving a happy and inspiring memory of fine work done, and unity demonstrated. India had found her voice. India was realising herself as a Nation". Later developments justified the hopes expressed by the sponsors that "it will form the germ of a Native Parliament", which actually came into existence in 1947.

The way that lay before her proved to be long rough and thorny and the march to nationhood and freedom required sixty-two years' of steady devotion and much sacrifice gladly made by her millions of children, acting under the inspiration and leadership of the Indian National Congress.

Gandhiji and the Partition of India

BY

K. K. SHARMA

Great men do not make mistakes, they commit blunders. Their followers explain away such blunders on grounds of expediency. Gandhiji is given all credit for bringing freedom to India; there is a major section of Indian public opinion which is not prepared to listen to anything against Gandhiji. Is it the force of habit or sheer habitual reluctance to call a spade a spade?

Indian independence and vivisection of India are correlated terms. On 15th August, 1947, Indo-British struggle came to an end with the self-liquidation of British Rule and consequent transfer of power to two dominions—India and Pakistan. Partition and independence arrived together. It is generally believed that Gandhiji has brought freedom to the nation. If Gandhiji has brought freedom to the Nation, who brought partition? The question has to be judged in the light of historical decisions and indecisions of the Indian National Congress under his leadership. Gandhiji was the Director of Indo-British human drama which culminated in partition. True, there were actors like Pt. Nehru, Sardar Patel, Acharya Kripalani, Maulana Azad and others who played their part in the drama. Could not have Gandhi, the Director of the Stage, dropped the scene and gone back to the court of the people which had made him what he was? Did the people want partition? Why did he succumb to the plan of partition agreed to by his political lieutenants?

Many Indian writers and contemporaries of Gandhiji like Pyare Lal. Kripalani and Durga Das have tried to put the responsibility of partition on Sardar Patel, and Pt. Nehru instead of Gandhiji.

Who was virtually responsible for partition is a matter of controversy. Correct answer can be traced from the facts on record. One thing is certain: partition was first accepted in principle by all concerned and only then independence was announced. So, first

came partition and not independence! It was partition that brought freedom and not freedom that brought partition. If Gandhiji was not responsible for the partition of the country, how could he be given whole of the credit for bringing freedom to India?

There are two parts of the story: first, the historical part which has to do with the policies and decisions of Gandhiji, and their impact on Indian nationalist movement; second part has to do with the circumstances which eventually turned out to be the causative factors of partition.

I

The way Gandhiji dealt with varying situations arising from Indo-British confrontation vis-a-vis the strategy of Indian National Congress brings forth three things: ring of opportunism on the part of Gandhiji, extraordinary ability to grasp the genesis of each situation and its natural tendencies and Gandhiji's all out efforts to make the genesis of the situation commensurate with his philosophy of Satyagraha. He showed consummate skill in sponsoring and directing a movement but when prospects of failure stirred him in the face, he developed cold feet. Naturally, therefore) when a movement failed who was to blame for it? Gandhiji's lieutenants—probably not. The masses not at all. One might say that Gandhiji alone was responsible for those failures—1919, 1922, 1931, 1942 and 1947. He will be remembered more as a paradox than a prophet in history. How long the nation will pay reverence and glorify this man of flesh and blood who like a banyan tree did not allow anyone to grow under him and dogmatically kept imposing his decisions on the Indian National Congress and at the most profound psychological moment of partition succumbed to the June proposals.

Gandhiji wanted leadership of the Congress first for his policy of non-co-operation and secondly for the implementation of his doctrines of Satyagraha and 'non-violence'. Subbhas Bose has correctly remarked, "He only wanted more allies in order to be able to capture the leadership of the Congress... He had therefore, strengthened himself by an alliance with the Muslim leaders and the All-India Khilafat Committee".¹ The death of Lokmanya Tilak

1. S. C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 64.

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in August 1920 on the eve of the Calcutta Congress removed from the field the only possible rival of Gandhiji. So, from 1920, Gandhiji's influence in the Congress began to increase until it became supreme. He became the judge and the jury in his own cause. In fact he was the Congress. He alone was to be the final judge of what was right or wrong. If the country wanted his leadership, it had to accept his infallibility; if it did not, he would stand aloof from the Congress and carry on in his own way. Many people thought that his policies were irrational but they had either to withdraw from the Congress or place themselves at his feet to do as he liked. Therefore, in such an unrivalled position Gandhiji committed blunder after blunder and brought untold sufferings to the masses and the country till the partition took place.

The first political blunder he committed was when he injected 'Khilafat question' in Indian politics. By this he exposed the politically-minded Muslim community to intense religious consciousness and other dangers; that their religion and politics must go together; that their original home was some-where else; that their religious loyalty lay outside India; that they are a separate nation and that their culture and traditions were different from Hindus. V. P. Menon has correctly observed, "The Hindu-Muslim unity which Gandhiji sought to build up on the Khilafat issue did not last long—while few among the Muslims understood what 'Khilafat' stood for, all understand the cry of 'Islam in Danger'. On this ephemeral issue, the true basis of which was not clearly perceived, Gandhiji endeavoured to cement an alliance between Muslims and Hindus. The first shock was Mopalah outbreak in Malabar in 1921; the second the repudiation by Turkey of the Khilafat itself and her rejection of all extraneous mediation in the matter. The temporary alliance thus came to an abrupt end, resulting in the reversion of the two communities to their mutual animosities.²

It will be quite pertinent to note the views of Pt. Nehru on the Khilafat Question. He said 'Owing to the prominence given to the Khilafat Movement in 1921 a large number of Moulaivies

2. V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power*, p. 31.

and Muslim religious leaders took a prominent part in the political struggle. They gave a definite religious tinge to the movement and Muslims generally were greatly influenced by it. Many a Westernized Muslim, who was not of a particular religious turn of mind, began to grow a beard and otherwise conform to the tenets of Orthodoxy. The influence and prestige of the Moulavies which had been gradually declining owing to new ideas and a progressive Westernisation began to grow again and dominate the Muslim community. The Ali brothers, themselves of religious turn of mind, helped in the process, and so did Gandhiji, who paid the greatest regard to the Moulavies and Maulanas'.³

Gandhiji brought religion in politics and by doing that he committed a second blunder which later on paved the way for Pakistan. Gandhiji declared, "I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.... thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion—they subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death—adder because they kill the soul."⁴

Bazaz also observes: "By arousing religious passions to activize freedom struggle....Gandhiji hyptonised the intellectuals as well as the masses by preaching and practising his scarcely disguised theories of Hindu revivalism in the garb of moral precepts....The introduction of the religious ceremonies no doubt gave an impetus to the freedom movement among the religion-ridden Hindu masses because it stirred their deep-seated emotions. But to the same extent the Congress leaders succeeded in alienating the sympathies of the Muslims for the great cause; the minority moved farther away from the Congress. Under-Gandhiji's vigilant mentorship rational thinking was at a discount."⁵

Ronald Segal in his 'The Crisis of India' acknowledges this fact, "The Calcutta Congress in 1920 had initiated the era of Gandhi's leadership with its appeal to the Hindu masses, its stress on the wearing of Khadi, its increasing use of Hindi at Congress meetings, its employment of Satyagraha as sanctioned by Hindu

3. J. L. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 71-72.

4. Quoted in Prem Nath Bazaz, *Whither India after Independence*, p. 129.

5. *Ibid.*

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doctrine and tradition. For the truth is, ironically and tragically, that it was Gandhi, the passionate apostle of Indian unity, who did most, by the very character of his leadership, to divide the Indians, who, by giving the Congress struggle a peculiarly Hindu caste, antagonized the Muslims at the same time as he attracted the Hindus.⁶ By this he for his personal ends introduced a powerful foreign and religious element in purely political freedom struggle and unconsciously injected a cancerous element in the body politic of India.

The third and the greatest blunder was Jinnah's outser from the Congress by Gandhiji which brought the greatest harm to the Congress and the country. After 1920, he became Gandhiji's vigorous political opponent. Pt. Nehru has written in his autobiography, about this incident. He said, "A few old leaders, however, dropped out of the Congress after Calcutta, and among those a popular and well-known figure was that of Mr. M. A. Jinnah. Sarojini Naidu had called him the 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity', and he had been largely responsible in the past for bringing the Muslim League nearer to the Congress."⁷ According to K. M. Munshi, ".... When Gandhiji forced Jinnah and his followers out of the Home Rule League and later the Congress, we all felt, with Jinnah, that a movement of an unconstitutional nature, sponsored by Gandhiji with the tremendous influence he had acquired over the masses, would inevitably result in widespread violence, barring the progressive development of self-growing institutions—based on a partnership between educated Hindus and Muslims. To generate coercive power in the masses would only provoke mass conflict between the two Communities, as in fact, it did."⁸

Gandhiji did one thing more when he unconsciously made the Muslims conscious that they are a separate nation and in India their tradition was one of conquest and empire. The result was that Muslims came out openly with the charge that the removal of the British would mean restoration of Hindu rule. That was the beginning of Hindu-Muslim conflict and communal politics which

6. Ronald Segal, *The Crisis of India*, p. 107.

7. J. L. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 67-68.

8. K. M. Munshi, *Pilgrimage to freedom*, pp. 17-18.

later on Jinnah adroitly turned into the demand for a separate home for Indian Muslims.

It is wrong to suppose that Jinnah was the originator of two-nation theory. In fact the theory was already being built up as a historical reality. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first Muslim to propogate this idea through Aligarh movement after the foundation of Indian National Congress. He believed that the Hindus and the Muslims were two nations who could never unite. The first of the four aims of the Aligarh Movement was 'the Hindus and the Muslims form two separate political entities with separate outlook and conflicting interests'.

In a public speech in 1888, Sir Syed Ahmad made the point, "Now suppose that all the English were to leave India, then who would be the rulers of India? Is it possible that under the circumstances, two nations, the Mohammedan and the Hindu, could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down. The hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable".⁸

Again it is also wrong to suppose that Hindu-Muslim disunity was the creation of the British. The fact is otherwise. Animosity between the two communities was there, the Britishers only exploited the situation to suit their political ends through their ingenious device of 'divide and rule'. Dr. R. C. Majumdar pointedly observes: "The contribution of the British rule to the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims should be considered in its proper perspective. It must be frankly admitted that the roots of the cleavage lay deep in the soil; and it was already manifest even early in the 19th century. The British did not create it but merely exploited the patent fact to serve their own interests".⁹

The common sufferings under the British rule should have forced the two communities to come closer and develop a national outlook but the deeprooted mutual antagonism did not disappear because for a century before independence the Muslims entertained

9. *The Political and Cultural History of the Indian People*, Vol. 10, Part II, p. 315.

grave fears about the establishment of democracy (Hindu majority rule) in India on the termination of the British Rule.

The White Hall for its political advantage conceded the separate electorate and communal representation to, in Minto's words 'The Muslim nation'. This was done because the Muslims wanted special privileges and rights for their community. It was an integral part of the Constitution. It is generally believed that by giving separate electorate to the Muslims the dye was cast for a separate Muslim State. This is quite wrong and not understandable. All nationalists did not regard them as hostile to the movement of Swaraj and through Lucknow Pact they put a seal on it.

Jinnah who was later to become the father of Pakistan was himself a nationalist and congressman. He took an active part in the Congress Sessions in 1908, 1910, 1913 and 1917. In 1910 Jinnah declared his opposition to the scheme of communal representation in local bodies and strongly denounced it. As a member of the Congress delegation he went to England with Gokhale and Lajpat Rai in 1913 and 1914 respectively. He, as Congressman had an impressive record of achievements and service to India in the Imperial Legislative Council. He did not join the Muslim League for long because its purpose was too sectarian, when he formally joined it in 1913, he required his two sponsors "to make a solemn preliminary covenant that loyalty to the Muslim League and Muslim interest would in no way and in no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to the larger national cause, to which his life was dedicated."¹⁰ In a speech at Ahmedabad in October, 1916 he said: "As far as I understand the demand for separate electorates is not a matter of policy but a matter of necessity to the Muslims".¹¹

It was mainly on his initiative that the Congress and the Muslim League held their session in Bombay in 1915 and paved the way for Hindu-Muslim entente. He was nationalist to the core. While giving evidence before the Select Committee in 1919 he was asked whether he spoke really as an Indian Nationalist. He emphatically replied, 'I do'.

10. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, *Mohd. Ali Jinnah—An Ambassador of Unity*, pp. 41-42.

11. *Ibid*, 42.

The next question (put to him by Major Ormsby-Gore) was: "That is to say that at the earliest possible moment you wish to do away in political life with any distinction between Moham-madan and Hindu". Jinnah replied, "Yes, Nothing will please me more than when that day comes".¹²

He left the Congress in 1921 when he became convinced that the Congress was going the wrong way under Gandhiji. Why Jinnah's Muslim nationalism had got the better of his Indian Nationalism? "His pride had been wounded by the disdain with which the Congress and liberal leaders of the late 1920' had treated him....Jinnah never submitted to a slight..Neglect was a slight, rebuff an insult. The grievance of his rejection by the Congress leaders would not be assuaged until he had finally frustrated their purpose. Twenty years later, Mohd. Ali Jinnah was always a man of principle, but he was supremely a man of pride."¹³

It is true that in 1919 when anti-British feelings ran high the Hindus and the Muslims seemed to bury the hatchet, forget the past and foster brotherhood; but, it could not last long and even before the achievement of Independence, communal carnage and bloodshed were witnessed on an unprecedented scale. The Muslim fanatics exploited the Muslim minds and encouraged the Muslim distrust in the sense of fairness of the Hindus which was expressed by the Muslims in 1940 by advancing a demand for establishment of a separate homeland. The Hindu leaders opposed Gandhiji's policy of appeasement of Muslims and warned him of the consequences. But he cared little and expressed his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity and united India even though he was convinced that Hindu-Muslim unity was a myth and not possible. But being an adept in concealing his feelings, he did not admit it.

Jinnah was convinced that he could not deal with Gandhiji without learning his tactics and policies. He had learnt from Gandhiji the fact that without arousing religious sentiments of the Muslims he could not become a leader of that community. Obviously Hindu-Muslim disunity was essential. Again he had

12. Quoted in an Article (*Indian Express*) 'Gandhi and his contemporaries,' 31 Aug., 69 by P. C. Ray Chaudhry.

13. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, p. 42.

learnt from Gandhiji that through obstinacy in attitude he could become a true leader of the masses. Secondly, he realised that he should put his claim stubbornly and stick to it; and thirdly, violence was the only true weapon. Thus Jinnah closely followed upon Gandhiji's tactics and then challenged Gandhiji's slogan of Hindu-Muslim Unity and Non-violence, and asked him to accept himself as the leader of Hindu community. First, he challenged the right of Congress and Gandhiji to represent Muslims, secondly, he brought forward the right of self-determination for the Muslims in the Indian Union, and in the last, he demanded Pakistan as the National Home for the Muslims. In a letter to Gandhiji on January 1, 1940, he wrote:

"I have no illusions in the matter and let me say again that India is not a nation, nor a country. It is a sub-continent composed of nationalities: Hindus and Muslims being the two major nations."

"Events are moving fast: a campaign of polemics, or your weekly discourse in the 'Harijan' on metaphysics, philosophy and ethics, and your peculiar doctrines regarding Khaddar; Ahimsa; and spinning are not going to win India's freedom. Action and statesmanship alone will help us in our forward march".

"I believe that you might still rise to your stature in the service of our land and make your proper contribution towards leading India to contentment and happiness."

In his Presidential speech at Madras session of Muslim League in 1942 he spelt out the goal of the Muslim League: "We want the establishment of completely independent states in the north-west and eastern zones of India with full control finally of defence, foreign affairs communications, customs, currency, exchange, etc. We do not want in any circumstances a constitution of an All-India character with one Government at the Centre. We will never agree to it. We are determined and let there be no mistakes about it to establish the status of an independent nation and an independent state in this sub-continent." Therefore he gave the slogan 'Divide and Quit', when the Congress started 'Quit India' Movement. In spite of all this Jinnah did not have a clear conception of Pakistan till the arrival of Cabinet Mission. By then he had in mind a confederation of India comprising the three units of Pakistan (Muslims), Hindustan (Hindus) and the Rajasthan

(Princes). The Pakistan which resulted from partition in 1947 was a 'moth-eaten Pakistan' which he never wanted but was forced by Churchill and circumstances on him.

To Mahatma Gandhi freedom was meaningless if it did not preserve Hindu-Muslim unity. He was implacably opposed to Pakistan. In the long record of history it is evident that Gandhiji gravely under-rated the political influence of Jinnah over the Muslim masses though he did not declare this. Had Gandhiji assessed Jinnah's political potential correctly, he would not have spurned his suggestion for Congress-Muslim League coalition governments in the provinces after the elections of 1937.

Frustrated in his efforts to get a coalition government Jinnah in 1939 at Lucknow Session of the Muslim League spoke significantly of the Muslim 'nation', that would emerge from the struggle with the majority community, who had clearly shown their hand that Hindustan was for the Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi dubbed this utterance as declaration of war.

Still through his policy of appeasement and nature to surrender Gandhi once again committed a blunder. He was first to concede to the Muslims at the Ramgarh Congress session in 1940 'the right of separation as in the Hindu Joint family'. He suggested the setting up of a constituent assembly based on adult franchise and proposed that the Muslim members be allowed to decide whether they wished to live separately or as members of a 'joint family'.

The British sensed this utterance of Gandhiji and to outbid him, placed in Jinnah's hands a veto in advance to self-government. This was done both to tide over the period of war, and to checkmate the Congress.

In 1942, Congress rejected the Cripps Plan on Gandhiji's initiative because it provided that after the war, an Indian Union would be formed and given Dominion Status, but any province which chose to stay out of the Union would also be given a similar status—this virtually meant Pakistan. Gandhiji was prepared to give separate status but within the Indian Union and after the quitting of the British. While rejecting the Cripps offer, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution drafted by Nehru, which formally conceded for the first time the principle that it did not

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believe in keeping within the Union any area against its confessed wish. As he said in 1944:

"They should give India independence, and then let the Hindus and Muslims fight out the constitutional problems by themselves". "The British," he said, "were engaged in a diabolical conspiracy to stifle India's aspirations".¹⁴

In April 1944, Mr. Rajagopalachari with the consent of Gandhiji communicated a formula to Jinnah and had discussion and correspondence with him. The formula was: "The Muslim League should endorse the demand for independence and co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provisional interim government for the transitional period; after the termination of the war, a commission should be appointed to demarcate those contiguous districts in north-west and north-east India wherein the Muslims were in an absolute majority, and in those areas there should be a plebiscite of all the inhabitants to decide the issue of separation from Hindustan; if the majority decided in favour of forming a separate sovereign state such decisions should be given effect to Jinnah agreed to place this formula before the League, but refused to take personal responsibility for accepting or rejecting it."¹⁵

By the autumn of 1944, when Gandhiji realised that the time had come for a rapprochement with Muslims, Jinnah was committed to Pakistan and had no interest in a rapprochement. On the other hand, Gandhiji rebelled against the thought of partition, for him it was 'an untruth', 'a denial of God', a vivisection on the living flesh of India' and therefore, a sin. India divided against itself would be a denial of his whole life's work, and his task therefore was to wean Jinnah from his dream of Pakistan. On July 17, 1944 Gandhiji wrote to Jinnah for a meeting. 'Do not regard me as enemy of Islam or of Indian Muslims. I have always been a servant and friend to you and to mankind. Do not disappoint me'. Jinnah accepted it and visited Gandhiji at his residence in Bombay after mid-August.

14. Quoted by Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 510.

15. V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power*, pp. 162-63.

In his speech at the Working Committee of the Muslim League, on 30th July, 1944, he dismissed the Rajagopalachari formula as offering, "a shadow and a husk, a maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan".

"Gandhiji's willingness to discuss position of the country with Jinnah", wrote V. P. Menon,¹⁶ "provided bitter criticism.... The Sikhs were nervous about a settlement being reached over their heads. ... The Hindu Mahasabha was very bitter, Savarkar asserted that 'Indian provinces were not the private property of Gandhiji and Rajaji so that they could make a gift of them to anyone they liked'".

This was wrong on the part of Gandhiji because it enhanced Jinnah's prestige on the one hand and strengthened the cause of the Muslim League on the other.

On 24th September, 1944, Gandhiji made a concrete offer to Jinnah, stating that he was willing to recommend to Congress and the country the acceptance of the claim for separation contained in the League's Lahore resolution of 1940, under certain terms and conditions. Gandhiji's proposal was that of Rajagopalachari. Gandhiji, further proposed that, if the vote were in favour of separation, Muslims should be allowed to form a separate state as soon as possible after India was free. The talks failed because Jinnah wanted complete settlement before forming a united front.

In these talks Jinnah lost nothing. He knew to capitalise on every situation, however, unpromising. He always left his opponents to make mistakes. A point once gained was never lost, it became the starting ground for the next point. By this time he came at par with Gandhiji and his demand of Pakistan became the solid ground for further talks.

Gandhiji further paved the way for Pakistan when he blessed the agreement between Bhulabhai Desai and Liaquat Ali providing for equal representation to the Congress and the League in the reconstituted cabinet. Lord Wavell transformed it into an equality between Muslims and caste Hindus, which later remained the cardinal principle of British Government in conferences with

16. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

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League and Congress. Gandhiji objected to the rule of parity on the ground that Congress had always striven to be political, not communal, and disowned the pact, but with no results, for the damage had been done.

The seal of communalism was set on the trend with the Cabinet Mission's plan, though it rejected the Muslim League's demand for partition. The Congress would thus get an undivided India, though with a weak centre; the Muslim League would get the grouping of provinces it had wanted for the projected Pakistan; the groups would still be within the Indian Union; the princes would have the freedom of choice.

The plan was acceptable to both the Congress and the League; Maulana Azad called the plan's acceptance by the Congress and the League, 'a glorious event in the history of the freedom movement'.

Gandhiji's first reaction to the plan was favourable. He congratulated the Cabinet Mission for having evolved a plan which meant at last the British would get off India's back. But in the end Gandhiji had thrown his weight against its acceptance. The Congress Working Committee accepted the plan with certain reservations against the wishes of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji committed another blunder when he could not stop Nehru from making an unfortunate statement 'that the Congress was free to modify the Cabinet Mission Plan' as it pleased. This gave a pretext to Jinnah to refuse to accept the Cabinet Mission plan and declare, "the only solution for India's problem is Pakistan". Pran Chopra, in his book 'Uncertain India' has correctly observed, "He knew the dice was loaded in his favour; he had only to wait and fragments of India would fall into his lap as Pakistan. By now he had full power to offer or withhold the co-operation of the Muslim majority areas, and the British Government was determined that no constitution would be imposed on an unwilling area."¹⁷

This tempted the Muslim League to think of no compromise. On 27th July, 1946 the Muslim League announced rejection of the

17. Pran Chopra, *Uncertain India*, pp. 7-8.

Cabinet Mission Plan and also announced that it would observe August 16 as 'Direct Action Day'. It was indeed to prove the need for Pakistan. In the next few months the League fought the Congress and Gandhiji on three fronts and won on each; across negotiating table, in the interim government, in the streets. Jinnah brought parity with caste Hindus; he made them understand that Hindu Muslim unity was a myth and that violence, not non-violence was the surest weapon. In that he gave an ensuing defeat to Gandhiji's ideals of United India and non-violence.

II

Jinnah made the working of interim Coalition Government impossible. The Congress leaders had now realized that there was no escape from Partition. Pt. Nehru and Patel acknowledged and endorsed Jinnah's two nation theory in March 1947, by advocating in a resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee the division of the Punjab into Muslim majority and Hindu majority areas. This was done without consulting Gandhiji who reacted sharply and considered this to be an hour of great humiliation. Gandhiji on his arrival on 31st March, 1947, said to Azad, 'Partition has now become a threat. It seems Vallabhai and even Jawahar Lal have surrendered. What will you do now? Will you stand by me or have you also charged?' Gandhiji continued, 'What a question to ask? If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body. So long as I am alive, I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow Congress to accept it'¹⁸

But after his meeting with Lord Mountbatten, Gandhiji was a changed man. Azad had written in his book, "What happened during this meeting I do not know. But when I met Gandhiji again, I received the greatest shock of my life for I found that he had changed. He was still not openly in favour of partition but he no longer spoke so vehemently against it."¹⁹

How and why did Gandhiji accept the scheme for Pakistan. It was a hidden story which has been recently brought to light after the publication of these books: Hodson's 'The Great Divide';

18. Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 186.

19. *Ibid*, p. 187.

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John Terraine's 'Life and times of Lord Mountbatten', Campbell Johnson's 'My Mission with Mountbatten' and Sudhair Ghosh's 'Gandhi's Emmissary'.

Before his arrival in India, Lord Mountbatten was advised by Cripps to win over Gandhiji if he was to get success for his mission and for this he suggested the name of Sudhir Ghosh. The Viceroy asked for a letter from Sudhir Ghosh for Gandhiji, "But I must see Mr. Gandhi. So will you please write a letter to him tonight and have it delivered tomorrow morning at 8 at my house at 16, Belgrave Square, just behind Buckingham Palace. Soon after 8 I will fly off to India. Give Mr. Gandhi an account of what I have told you and do everything in your power to persuade him to come to New Delhi to see me."²⁰

Sudhir Ghosh gave a letter and duly delivered it next morning. In due course a reply came from Gandhiji which said:

Patna,
21-9-47

Chiranjiv Sudhir and Shanti,

....I have little to say to you. I have to listen to what you may have to say. You must have seen all I had to do with the Viceroy. We have come to like one another. Events will show of what he is made. He is certainly working hard as behoves a naval man.

"Bapu"²¹

Lord Mountbatten's first act was to win Nehru, because Nehru was Gandhiji's heir, spokesman, his weakness and moreover Gandhiji suffered from a superiority complex in his relations with Nehru. So after winning over Jawahar Lal, it was not difficult to win over Gandhiji and moreover Gandhiji wanted 'recognition' as Romain Rolland had said.

About his meeting with Gandhiji the Viceroy said, "At my first meeting with Gandhi we did not talk any business. We just chatted. I told him how the Prince of Wales and I had tried to meet him when we were here in 1921, and

20. Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emmissary*, p. 206.

21. *Ibid* p. 207.

how we were not allowed to—he was readily interested in that. Then I got him to tell me about his early life, his political beginnings in South Africa and how he built up the non-violent Independence movement. We spent two hours talking in this way and the Press could hardly believe that we had not been deciding the fate of India. Well, perhaps we had indirectly”.

He further said “His personal popularity and influence were enormous. We might not be able always to take Gandhiji along with us—but we would get no-where if he came out against us”.²² So Lord Mountbatten made him a friend. He was in constant touch with Gandhiji than was generally believed. He made the best use of Gandhi’s tremendous influence—both spiritual and political—in accomplishing his mission in India.

The gist of these talks has been given by Hodson. He writes, “In his talk with the party spokesman and with Mahatma Gandhi Lord Mountbatten made it clear that his mind was clear, that Cabinet Mission Plan was a potential starting point for a new settlement; which he was bound to consider until it had been proved useless; and that partition, if it were to come must be applied to the disputed provinces as well as All India and must allow for the joint conduct of the essential affairs of the successor states”.²³

Soon after Mountbatten realised that if power was not transferred quickly there would be nothing left to transfer, because the Cabinet Mission Plan was dead and neither Congress nor the League would accept it. He made partition plan and informally consulted Nehru, who gave his consent to it. As Mountbatten himself stated in his Nehru Memorial Lectures, “Nehru realised that this would mean a much earlier transfer of power even though it were two governments and left a good chance for the essential unity of India to be maintained.” To Gandhi he made it clear, as he himself has said, “For Gandhi the transfer of power was the culmination of his life-work”.

On June 2, 1947, the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten had a historic conference with the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League and a representative of the Sikhs at which the partition

22. John Terraine, *The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten*, p. 110.

23. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, p. 290.

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of the country was accepted, though reluctantly. On the evening of the 2nd June, a long letter arrived from Mr. Kripalani (the Congress President) reporting acceptance of the plan²⁴ by the Congress Working Committee in order to achieve final settlement.

The same day, the Viceroy saw Gandhiji and after considerable pains could persuade him that the plan was the best under the circumstances. It was Gandhiji's day of silence but he wrote a friendly note on the back of an envelope and the Viceroy heaved a sigh of relief. Gandhiji alone could have nullified the acceptance of the plan.

About this meeting Acharya Kripalani, says, "The details of the talk are not known. It was Gandhiji's silence day."²⁵

V. P. Menon in his 'Transfer of Power' has narrated the facts like this: "Soon after his interview with the leaders, the Viceroy saw Gandhiji; the latter, as we have seen, had been preaching at his prayer meetings against the very idea of partition. The Viceroy recounted to him the various steps which had led to the present position. He pointed out those features in the plan which conformed to Gandhiji's ideas, and explained the reasons for such features as were not in harmony with his views. In the end he was able to persuade Gandhiji that the plan was the best in the circumstances. It was Gandhiji's day of silence, but he wrote a friendly note, which reassured the Viceroy."²⁶

Campbell Johnson also refers to it, while Hodsoon in 'The Great Divide' gives a detailed account of the meeting. He records: "Meanwhile, however, Lord Mountbatten had been faced with another daunting task of diplomacy, and persuasion. Mr. Gandhi had been ardently preaching at his prayer meetings against the Plan for partition and in favour of imposing the Cabinet Mission's Scheme which himself had scotched a year earlier. A rift in the Congress Working Committee seemed the certain consequence. The Viceroy apprehensively invited the Mahatma for a talk on the

24. The Plan provided that there would be two independent dominions, remaining within the Commonwealth-India, predominantly Hindu, and there would be a divided Pakistan, West and East. Jinnah wanted a corridor between the two parts, but this was refused.

25. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi His Life and Thought*, p. 287.

26. V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, p. 375.

Monday afternoon. 'Judge' he wrote, 'of my astonished delight on finding him enter the room with his fingers on his lips to indicate that it was his day of silence'. Lord Mountbatten used his fullest art to persuade Mr. Gandhi that to enforce such a plan as that of the Cabinet Mission against the will of any community was not in accordance with non-violence, and that the way of deciding for or against partition was trusting to the will of the people. Mr. Gandhi barred for arguing, seemed mollified, and scribbled notes in friendly terms on the back of used envelopes. Later he made no attempt to alter or frustrate this decision of the Working Committee."²⁷

After this fateful meeting Gandhiji did not oppose the partition as Maulana Azad had written in his book, 'India wins freedom'. "Gandhiji's conversion to the Mountbatten Plan has been a cause of surprise and regret to me. He now spoke in the Working Committee in favour of partition."²⁸

On June 4, after the H. M. Government's announcement Gandhiji said that, he "had already told them over and over again that to yield an inch to force was wholly wrong. The Working Committee held that they had to yield to the force of circumstances. The vast majority of Congress men did not want unwilling partners. Their motto was non-violence and, therefore, no coercion. Hence after careful weighing of the pros and cons of the vital issues at stake, they had reluctantly agreed to the secession from the Indian Union that was being framed of those parts which had boycotted the Constituent Assembly. He then expressed sorrow at what he considered was a mistaken policy of Muslim League... He could not blame Lord Mountbatten for what had happened. It was the act of the Congress and the Muslim League. The Viceroy had openly declared that he wanted a united India but he was powerless in face of the Congress acceptance, however, reluctantly, of the Muslim position."²⁹

In reply to a question asked by some people whether he would undertake a fast unto death in view of the decision of the Congress Working Committee accepting division of India—had

27. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 313-314.

28. Maulana Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 193.

29. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, p. 4.

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not he called Pakistan a sin in which he could never participate? —Gandhi said on June 5, 'that he could not fast at the dictation of any one ... the fasts could not be undertaken out of anger ... He must, therefore, undertake the fast only when the still small voice within him called for it. He was a servant of the country and therefore, of the Congress. Was he to fast because the Congress differed from his views?'³⁰

Gandhiji received a number of protests from all over the country. People blamed Congress and Gandhiji. 'A woman correspondent wrote to Gandhi that he should retire to jungle. It was he who had spoilt Jinnah and turned his head. He was responsible for the evil that the country was facing.'³¹ Although Gandhi was defending himself and the Congress in his heart he was feeling bitterly.

Hodson has beautifully related the story; he said: 'A few days after the announcement, the Viceroy was told that Mr. Gandhi was in a very wretched emotional mood and might denounce the Plan at his next prayer meeting. Lord Mountbatten asked him to come round for a talk. The Mahatma was indeed obviously very upset, and began by saying how unhappy he was at Lord Mountbatten's spoiling his life's work. The Viceroy replied that while he shared Mr. Gandhi's distress at seeing a united India apparently destroyed, he hoped to convince him that the new plan was the only possible way to achieve an early and peaceful transfer of power. Indeed it might well have been called the Gandhi Plan, since all its salient points had been suggested by him.'

"In the first place Gandhiji had pressed the Viceroy to try to get the Cabinet Mission Plan or any other, retaining the unity of India accepted by all the leaders, providing that it did not involve coercion or violence. Unable, despite every effort, to follow first part of this advice, Lord Mountbatten had followed the second part and had not insisted on encouraging a scheme with grave risk of violent resistance. Secondly, Mr. Gandhi's advice had been to leave the choice of their future to the Indian people. It was, therefore, he who had given Lord Mountbatten the idea of letting

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 5.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the provinces choose as the simplest and fairest way of carrying out that advice. Thirdly, Mr. Gandhi had urged that the British should quit India and transfer power as soon as possible. The Viceroy was very proud to have found a solution to this most difficult problem. He understood, he said, that in the past Mr. Gandhi had not been averse to dominion status. The Mahatma agreed and later sent an extract from '*Harijan*' of the 16th December, 1939 in which he had written: 'I have said to a friend that if dominion status was offered, I should take it and expect to carry India with me.'

"Mr. Gandhi was obviously impressed and mollified...., and when the Working Committee's acceptance of the plan was brought before the All India Congress Committee on 14th June he supported the resolution."³²

Guru Dutt, in his book: '*India in the shadow of Gandhi and Nehru*' observes, "when Dr. Choithram was speaking, Nehru and Patel had felt the earth was giving way from under their feet. That day Gandhi was observing his 'silence' day at the Harijan colony. The Congress leaders felt that if voting on the resolution was taken after Mr. Choithram Gidwani's speech, the Mountbatten Plan would be rejected; so they sent a special messenger to the Harijan colony for Gandhi to hurry up to the meeting and save Jawaharlal and his supporters. And Gandhi broke his vow of silence that day, hurried to the Constitution Club, and pleaded at the A.I.C.C. meeting as persuasively as he could."³³

Gandhiji addressed the A.I.C.C. for forty minutes, commended the Working Committee Resolution and pleaded that the Working Committee as their representatives had accepted the plan and it was the duty of A.I.C.C. to stand by them. He said, 'those who talked in terms of an immediate revolution of an upheaval in the country would achieve it by throwing out this resolution. But then he asked 'if they had the strength to take over the reins of the Congress and the Government.' "Well, I have not that strength today, or else I would declare rebellion to day," he added.

32. H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 317-18.

33. Guru Dutt, *India in the Shadow of Gandhi and Nehru*, p. 229.

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"Gandhi emphasised that his views on the Plan were well-known. The acceptance of the Plan did not involve only the Working Committee. There were two other parties to it, namely, the British Government, and the Muslim League. If at this stage the A.I.C.C. rejected the Working Committee's decision, what would the world think of it? All parties had accepted it and surely it would not be proper for the Congress to go back on its word. If the A.I.C.C. felt so strongly on this point that this plan would do a lot of injury to the country, then it could reject the plan. The consequence of such a rejection would be the finding of a new set of leaders who could constitute not only the Congress Working Committee, but also take charge of the government. If the opponents of the resolution could find such set of leaders, the A.I.C.C. could then reject the resolution, if it so felt. They should not forget, at the same time, that peace in the country was very essential at this juncture."

"The Congress was opposed to Pakistan and Gandhiji also steadfastly opposed the division of India. Yet he had come before the A.I.C.C. to urge the acceptance of resolution of India's division. Sometimes, certain decisions, however unpalatable they might be, had to be taken ... The A.I.C.C. could reject the resolution if they could be certain that such a rejection would not lead to turmoil and strike in the country. The Members of the C.W.C. were old and tried leaders who were responsible for all the achievements of the Congress hitherto and, in fact, they formed the backbone of the Congress and it would be most unwise, if not impossible, to replace them at the present juncture ... Out of mistakes sometimes good emerged. Ram was exiled because of his father's mistake, but ultimately his exile resulted in the defeat of Ravana, the evil."

"I admit that whatever has been accepted is not good," he then added. "But I am confident good will certainly emerge out of it." The A.I.C.C., he hoped, was capable of extracting good out of this defective plan, even as gold was extracted from dirt."³⁴

With these facts in hand, supporters of Gandhiji had come out with the argument that he was not responsible for the partition of

34. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, pp. 17-18.

the country. Durga Das pin-points the view. "Had the audience roared back that they would follow him to resist partition, he might have reflected on his duty to the nation."³⁵ Had Gandhiji asked the members of the audience he would have got support of the A.I.C.C. He was pleading to support it, not to oppose it and moreover, Gandhiji never cared for the masses. This time he stood completely shorn of so-called inner voice. What was most astounding was the fact that the man of intuition was taking the shelter of reason?

Acharya Kripalani in defence of Gandhiji says, "It may be that he instinctively felt that the sands of time were running out and he could not leave the country without a leadership."³⁶ What a flimsy and untenable defence, indeed!

Horace Alexander endorsing Gandhiji's view remarks in, 'India wins Freedom' the impression is given that Gandhi did in fact change his mind on the subject of partition, and at the end thought it unnecessary. 'I believe this is not correct ... But whether the Maulana was right or wrong, postponement was the very last thing Gandhi wanted. He wanted the British to quit at once, whether the result was to jeopardise the Cabinet Mission Plan or not.'³⁷

The most forceful defence of the Gandhi line comes from Pyarelal, his faithful Secretary. In his own words: ... "On June 1, Gandhiji woke up earlier than the morning prayer time and lay in bed and was heard musing audibly, (the fact was never mentioned by Gandhiji himself) ... "Today I find myself alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon ... they do not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be a partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British Rule. They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true and loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be. I see clearly that we are setting about this business, the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately,

35. Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, p. 248.

36. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi, His Life and Thought*, p. 288.

37. Horace Alexander, *Gandhi Through Western Eyes* pp. 149-150.

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but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark." After a while he continued, "But may be all them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old man went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhiji was a party to India's vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for India's independence. .therefore there is no other help "38

If this statement of Pyarelal is to be accepted as correct, then Gandhiji was not his real self—a true Satyagrahi. He was concealing his feelings and doing everything against his will. He had strayed away from his principles of non-violence and truth, and with this volitional act of his, he had given in to the most irrational logic of circumstances. Instead of giving a lead in this hour of low lights and growing darkness the apostle of non-violence and vigorous exponent of Satyagraha was staging a retreat, wholly unworthy of him. A parallel to his agony and retreat can be traced in the History of England when Chamberlain on the failure of his policy of appeasement said on 3rd September, 1939 before the House of Commons with profound sorrow "This is a sad day for all of us and none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my political life, has crashed to pieces".

Despite such powerful defence of Gandhiji nothing can stop some historians from coming to the conclusion that Gandhiji was responsible for the partition of India because he was the Director of Indo-British Human Drama; others were actors only, meant to play their assigned roles. His plea that he was the servant of the country and therefore of the Congress is not worth its candle. On many an occasion he acted against the wish of the A. I. C. C. When resolution was passed regarding independence in 1927 at Madras, Gandhiji declared, 'it had been hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed.' When Subhash was elected a second time the President of the Congress, against the wishes of Gandhiji, the A.I.C.C. authorised Subhash to form his Working Committee in

38. Pyarelal, *The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 211.

consultation with Gandhiji, but Gandhiji refused to shoulder this burden.

If Gandhi was opposed to partition, he should have made it public, as he did at the time of Cabinet Mission Plan. If despite his opposition, the Working Committee had accepted the partition plan, Gandhiji would not have been held responsible for the partition barring the fact that his policies were slowly and imperceptibly leading to partition. Those who endorse Gandhiji line on the subject might say in his own idiom that he acted like a Head of the Joint family, when one son wanted separation, the father in the interest of the family divided it.

Raja Arjun Singh—the Hero of the Mutiny in Singhbhum

BY

R. DEVI

When the movement of 1857-58 broke out in Chhotanagpur, the discontented elements of that area began to look upon Arjun Singh as their natural leader. He was a resident of Porahat in Singhbhum district and commanded great influence over the *Kols* and was regarded by them with the "reverence due to the deity".¹ He was a very learned man and was also endowed with strong sense of justice. On 13th August, 1857, the people issued a proclamation to the effect that "the people belonged to God, the country to the king, and Urjoon Singh is Ruler thereof."² On hearing this, Chakradhar Singh, the Raja of Sarikela fled away from Chaibasa leaving it into the hands of the sepoys, who however, did not immediately revolt as they had been waiting to hear something definite from Arjun Singh. But he seemed to be lukewarm in his attitude. Though he was hesitant, his brother Baij Nath Singh along with a number of courtiers named Jaggu, Raghu Deo and others were pressing him to join the revolt.³

In the meantime the leaders of the movement at Ranchi and some others including Thakur Bishwanath Singh and Madho Singh Jamadar were inducing the local sepoys to revolt. Hence at last on 3 September, they raised the standard of revolt and after capturing the treasury and releasing convicts from the jail, proceeded towards Ranchi. But on September 5, they were stopped on the bank of the swollen river, Sangai (to the west of Chaibasa) by a band of 500 to 600 *kols*, who would not let them go until a messenger from Raja Arjun Singh took the sepoys (100 men) with trea-

1. Letter from Dalton, Commissioner of Chhotanagpur to the Government of Bengal, dated 26 June, 1861, State Records Office, Patna.

2. Cited in-Datta, K. K., *Unrest Against British Rule in Bihar, 1831-1859*, pp. 66-67.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

tures to Chakradharpur, the head quarters of the Raja, where they were detained by the latter.⁴

The senior Assistant Commissioner, Lieutenant Birch learnt that the Kols had also decided to join Arjun Singh and that a large number of them equipped with arms, were on their way to Porahat to join him. Birch therefore first of all reoccupied Chaibasa (which had been deserted earlier by his predecessor, Capt. Sissmore) on 16 September and decided to deal firmly with Arjun Singh who was yet in a vacillating state of mind. The Raja sent messages of loyalty to Birch and expressed his willingness to make a personal call on him at Chaibasa. When however, the Raja failed to call on Birch, the latter proclaimed him a rebel on 23 September and a reward of rupees one thousand was offered for his apprehension. In addition to this, his estate was confiscated.⁵

Thereupon Arjun Singh decided to go to Ranchi to meet the Commissioner and informed Birch accordingly on 25 September.⁶ On 11 October, he reached Ranchi with treasure and sepoy's, all guarded by the kol archers, and surrendered to Capt. Davies (who had been sent with a strong force to receive him) 100 mutineers as prisoners, 100 stand of arms, a considerable quantity of ammunitions and a sum of rupees nineteen thousand five hundred and seventy eight annas eight and pies nine.⁷ This sum he had recovered from the mutineers. He also promised to hand over to the Government the gold and silver ornaments, secured from their persons and to make a further payment of Rupees five thousand nine hundred and fiftysix annas eight and eight and a half pies to the government.⁸ Thereupon he was asked to return immediately to Chaibasa and to surrender himself to Lieutenant Birch for trial. The Raja went back but did not surrender. It is said that his *Diwan*, Jaggu pressed him not to take such a humiliating step. The reason was that Jaggu had been secretly inciting the Kols to

4. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

6. Arzi from Arjun Singh dated 21 Asin, 1265 F.S., State Central Records Office, Patna.

7. Commissioner's Report dated 30 September, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

8. *Home Public Consultation* dated 89 January, 1858, No. 145, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

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rise once again. Probably this was the reason why Arjun Singh did not surrender and instead he conveyed to Birch his profession of loyalty and a promise to keep his pledge given to them (British).⁹

Dalton, the Commissioner of Chhotanagpur, was feeling that the Raja continued to be loyal.¹⁰ But the British government considered his non-submission as an affront to British officialdom and directed him to go 'to Chaibasah as a suppliant'.¹¹ Up to this time, Raja Arjun Singh was loyal to the British government. The men and messages sent by Bishwanath Sahi requesting him to join the rebellion had produced no effect upon him so far.

Soon afterwards an unhappy incident took place which proved decisive in changing the mind of Arjun Singh. His only child to whom he was much attached died. This, together with the ill treatment that was meted out to him by the British Government in lieu of his loyal services, added with a sense of sin for betraying the patriots into their enemy's hands made him realise his follies and he now decided to join the rebels openly. On his return to Porahat he removed his ladies from Chakradharpur to Porahat, and refused to receive messengers from British officials directing one of them to "tell the 'Sahibs' that they were prepared to fight."¹² He now began to make preparations for the ensuing conflict. Blacksmiths were employed to prepare cannon balls for the Raja's ordnance.¹³ Jaggu in the meantime expelled the police *chowki* which had been established at Chakradharpur by the Senior Assistant Commissioner during the Raja's absence. But three days after this incident, i.e., on 20 October, Birch attacked Chakradharpur, re-occupied the town, captured Jaggu Diwan and hanged him. Jaggu Diwan together with the Raja's father, Achet Singh, had been accused of complicity with the Kol insurgents in 1831-1832. The next day they attacked the Raja at Porahat, but after some resistance, the

9. District Gazetteer, Singhbhum, Saraikela and Kharsawan, p. 39.

10. Commissioner's Report dated 30 September, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Letter from the Commissioner of Chhotanagpur, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 30 September, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

13. Deposition of Gangadhar before the Senior Assistant Commissioner, Singhbhum, dated 21 March, 1859. State Central Records Office, Patna.

latter escaped with his men. But his palace and the adjoining villages were plundered and burnt by the British troops.¹⁴

In revenge the rebels murdered a man who was acting as a spy and guiding Birch in this expedition. They also ravaged and burnt the house and the nearby bazar of the Thakur of Kera who had also helped Birch. They then marched towards a village named Ayodhya. The number of the insurgents under the leadership of Baijnath Singh was about 2,000.¹⁵

A party including the forces of Saraikela Raja and Sikhs under Capt. Hale and Lushington* was sent against them. On seeing this party the rebels retired.¹⁶ The party next attacked and destroyed the Jayantgarh police-station, "which was a signal for an outbreak in the Southern Colehan."¹⁷ The British forces that had attacked Ayodhya were unable to follow them up. Consequently South Kolhan was now in open revolt and Chaibasa was itself threatened. Wide-spread excitement prevailed among the various tribes of Singhbhum towards the end of December, 1857.¹⁸

Therefore on 14 January 1958 the Commissioner, Dalton and the Senior Assistant Commissioner Birch together with Sikh forces under Capt. Hale effected an attack on the rebels at a place called Barbir. On way back they fell upon a party of hostile *Kols* on the bank of Mogra river and dispersed them. They also destroyed the village and returned. On their way back while crossing the deep bed of a dry nullah they found it swarming with rebels who made a surprise attack upon them with arrows which injured every one of them. Capt. Hale, commanding the Sikhs got four injuries, Lieutenant Birch's arm was pinned to his side by an arrow. Lushington and Dr. Hayes also received minor injuries. Thereupon the *Kols* pursued the party for about 7 miles, but could do no more harm to them and the party reached Chaibasa without any further casualty.¹⁹

14. Datta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 70.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.

16. Minute of F. E. J. Halliday, dated 30 September, 1858, States Central Records Office, Patna

*The Officiating Commissioner of Bardwan, who had been appointed Special Commissioner for the suppression of Mutiny in Singhbhum and Manbhum.

17. Letter from Commissioner of Chhotanagpur, to the Govt. of Bengal, dated 23 July, 1859, State Central Records Office, Patna.

18. *District Gazetteer*, Singhbhum, Saraikela and Kharsawan, p. 39.

19. Cited in Datta, *Op. cit.* pp. 71-72.

Next the insurgents attacked the Raja of Saraikela who had been left with 300 matchlockmen in Chakradharpur by the British. The British force that was later directed against the *Kols* was attacked by Arjun Singh's party and it suffered heavily.²⁰ The whole of Singhbhum was in open arms against the British government for the second time. The British government was completely uprooted for a time.

Soon afterwards on January 17, 1858 a Shekawati battalion and a body of 100 Europeans, arrived at Chaibasa under Colonel Forster. The Porahat insurgents were dispersed, the *rainats* submitted and the insurgent Chiefs took refuge in the hills. The *Kols* also submitted. This force destroyed Chakradharpur, the stronghold of Arjun Singh and defeated his close followers, the *Kols*. Arjun Singh and the *Kols* still persisted in their hostility to the government. Between March and June, 1858, several engagements took place between them and the British forces after which the rebels were compelled to take refuge in the mountain passes of Singhbhum. The Europeans were stationed at Chakradharpur and everything remained quiet until 26 March, 1858, when the place was attacked by a force of about 2 000 men under Baijnath Singh. But the rebels were repulsed.²¹ Nevertheless disturbances continued. Thereupon the rebel forces collected at Jumru (four miles west of Chakradharpur) and from there marched back to Chakradharpur on 10 June under Raja Arjun Singh's orders.²² A large number of armed *Kols* under the leadership of Raghu Deo surrounded Chakradharpur. During this attack six Europeans were killed. The rebels were however beaten off.²³

After this affair the insurgents retired to Porahat. From there they continued to exert their influence over the whole of Kolhan area till July next when a force operating under the Commissioner of Chotanagpur compelled them after incessant fighting to retire into the hills. The British troops however could not follow them. with the result that the insurgents remained undisturbed till

20. Bengal Judicial Department proceedings, dated 27 October, 1859, No. 167, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

21. *Ibid.*

22. The deposition of witness Greedhar Mahto before the Senior Assistant Commissioner on the 28 August, 1958.

23. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

November, 1858. During this period they continued to make occasional incursions and to harass the British troops by making nocturnal attacks upon them and by using other guerilla tactics. In the month of November a force under Baijnath Singh and Raghu Deo attacked Anandpur and drove out the Zamindar of that place who was a supporter of the British government in Singhbhum. Baijnath Singh and Raghu Deo remained detached from Arjun Singh all these days until January.²⁴ By this time the British government came to be in a better position in Singhbhum. On 29 January British forces under Lieutenant Birch attacked Kordiham (the abode of Raja Arjun Singh during this period) and occupied it. Here they captured a large quantity of arms, ammunitions, cash and correspondence belonging to the insurgents. But the Raja and his men escaped undetected. They showed no inclination to surrender, although the time-limit had expired. The Commissioner now adopted another device to capture Arjun Singh and his party. He put pressure up on Arjun Singh's father-in-law, the Raja of Mayurbhanj to persuade him to surrender.²⁵ This device proved very successful. On 10 February, some of the insurgents surrendered. This was followed by the capture of Baijnath Singh, the Raja's brother. On 15 February, 1859, Raja came to his father-in-law who surrendered him to the Commissioner. The revolt in Singhbhum was thus suppressed.²⁶ Raghu and Sham Karan, however remained at large. They continued to plunder with a party of rebels from Sambalpur.²⁷

After their surrender Raja Arjun Singh and his brother Baijnath Singh were tried for waging war against the British Government. But their lives were spared because the Raja had earlier delivered arms and prisoners to the government. They were banished from Singhbhum and their entire estate was confiscated. In December, 1859 Arjun Singh was sent to Banaras as a state prisoner with a pension of four hundred rupees a month.²⁸ He spent the rest of his life at Banaras as a political exile.²⁹

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

26. *District Gazetteer*, Singhbhum, pp. 40-42.

27. Bengal Judiciary Dep'tt. proceedings of August, 1861 (Ns. 224-30), National Archives of India, New Delhi.

28. Cited in Datta, *Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Vol. I, p. 84.

29. Datta, *Unrest Against British Rule in Bihar*, p. 76.

Simon Commission — a Case Study of its Appointment

BY

S. R. BAKSHI

In accordance with law, the Parliament of England was vested with the power and responsibility of shaping India's political future. It, therefore, felt to demand clear guidance on the action, it should take, after the ten-year period of trial, laid down in the Act of 1919, had expired. Section 84-A of this Act provided that at the expiration of ten years from the institution of reforms, a Royal Commission should be sent out to India in order to report to Parliament as to their progress and effects.¹ In 1927, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had been in operation for the last eight years and the statutory period as laid down in the Act, had not yet expired. But considerable pressure, agitation and criticism mounting from numerous patriotic Indian elements decided to anticipate the date of the Statutory Commission's appointment.²

It was indeed the fear of the probable adverse results of the general elections in 1929 in Great Britain which prompted the Conservative Party, headed by Stanley Baldwin, to think of accelerating the appointment of the Statutory Commission before the scheduled time. Lord Birkenhead, wrote to Lord Irwin 'We must not run the slightest risk of the delay in selection so much that an election might either interrupt our plans or even come soon enough to make it not wholly unreasonable to attempt some monkeying tricks with our selection. It is, of course, obvious that the mere ante-dating of the Commission, while it would

1. Home—Public, File 603, Dec. 8, 1927.

2. Cadogan, Edward; *The India We Saw*, p. 1.

probably give satisfaction in India, would deprive us of nothing valuable. We can play with the time as we want.³ Obviously, it was the common belief in the high echelons of British politicians that the coming elections would return the Labour Party to power. The Conservatives, therefore, wanted to gain a tactical advantage and could not afford to 'run the slightest risk that the nomination of the Commission should be in the hands of our successors.' Therefore, 'the Secretary of State felt that the acceleration of the Commission was our one card left and that it was a pity to play it until we were certain it would take a trick.'⁴ Besides, it was the general belief amongst the Conservatives that a Labour Government would be more helpful, sympathetic and considerate in acceding to the political demands of Indian leaders, and it might also go a step further in granting them such concessions as would be compatible with the vested interests of Britain in India. They, therefore, thought that it would be a safe and prudent measure to appoint the Commission forthwith and thus forestall the Labour Government.⁵

There was another reason which also hastened the appointment of the Statutory Commission. The Swaraj Party, under the leadership of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,⁶ considered to be the most balanced politician in our country and a broad-minded nationalist, was unhappy at the working of the reforms of 1919⁷ and expressed much dissatisfaction in this regard. This party had been pressing very hard, time and again, for more and more autonomy in the provinces and responsibility at the centre. The objective, therefore, of the Conservative Government was to utilize the appointment of the Commission as a bargain counter and to disintegrate the Swaraj Party.⁸

3. Secretary of State to Viceroy, Sept. 23, 1926, *Halifax Papers*.

4. Viceroy to Governor of Bombay, Jan. 26 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

5. Majumdar, R. C., *History of the Freedom Movement in India* Vol. III, p. 3089.

6. Law Member of Viceroy's Council 1920-23; President, National Liberal Federation of India, 1923 and 1927.

7. Besides Sapru, other leaders of India also criticised the working of the reforms.

8. Setalvad, C. H., *Recollections and Reflections*, p. 341, 'It was thought, however, that if the Statutory Commission was, as everybody seems to ex-

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Besides, Lord Birkenhead was seriously concerned over the changing political trends both in England and India. According to Lord Halifax, "the legal minds of Birkenhead and Reading were outraged that any one should speak about Dominion Status."⁹ In his private letter,¹⁰ which he wrote to Lord Reading, on December 10, 1925, he mentioned that in suggesting the acceleration of the Commission, "I always had it plainly in mind that we could not afford to run the slightest risk that the nomination of 1928 Commission should be in the hands of our successors. You can readily imagine what kind of a Commission in its personnel would have been appointed by Colonel Wedgewood,¹¹ and his friends. I have, therefore throughout been of the clear opinion that it would be necessary for us as a matter of elementary prudence to appoint a Commission not later than the summer of 1927. I should, therefore, like to receive your advice if at any moment you discern an opportunity for making this a useful bargain counter or for further disintegrating the Swarajist Party I am sure that having regard to political contingencies in this country, we must keep the nomination of the personnel of the Commission in our own hands. In this matter, we cannot run the slightest risk. My present view, therefore, is and I believe that the Prime Minister shares it — that we shall in any event, be playing for safety if we are driven to nominate the Commission in the middle of 1927. If such an acceleration affords you any bargaining value, use it to the full and with the knowledge that you will be supported by the Government."¹²

The personnel of the Statutory Commission was selected solely from the British Community without any Indian representative, although it was the future constitution of India which was to be

pect, appointed earlier than 1929, the Swarajists would claim, this as a concession by Government to their demands and would make it the excuse for abandoning pure obstruction.' (See letter from Viceroy to Governor of Bombay, Jan, 3, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

9. Halifax, Lord, *Fullness of Days*, p. 121.

10. Quoted in Birkenhead, *The Earl of Birkenhead, Last Phase*, pp. 252-53.

11. Colonel Josiah Wedgewood was a friend and sympathiser of Indian nationalists.

12. *Last Phase*, pp. 252-53.

the subject of inquiry, discussion and decision. This was obviously a wrong precedent which was bound to give offence to the patriotic sentiments of the people of India. In the past, in every Commission, dealing with Indian affairs, Indians were given proportional representation. In the Lee Commission¹³ and the Skeen Commission,¹⁴ Indians were duly represented and all this led to satisfactory results without any feelings of opposition.

The exclusion of Indians from the Statutory Commission was anticipated some time before the actual announcement was made.¹⁵ Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had returned from England shortly before the announcement of the Commission, declared that he was not at all surprised at the action of the British Government.¹⁶ When the names of the Commissioners were made public, he said in the course of an interview:—'During my recent visit to England, short as my stay was, there it became abundantly plain to me that the mind of Government had already been made up, that India could not hope for any support for its view-point from the Conservatives or Liberals, and that, at any rate, so far as some of the Labour leaders were concerned, they had placed serious limitations upon their liberty of action.'¹⁷ He further said: 'I cannot understand why this scheme could not have fitted in with adequate representation of Indians on the personnel of the Commission. The fear of minority reports is as naive as it is disingenuous. Nor can I believe that Government could not find in the whole of the country even three or four Indians who could inspire confidence generally.'¹⁸

'It can only mean a complete want of confidence in the judgement and capacity of Indians to serve on a Commission which is to determine the future Government of their country. The utmost that can be said in favour of this scheme is that they want to associate us with them at some stages only to the extent of

13. For complete list of members see Mitra, H. N., *Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1923, p. 21.

14. See Mitra, H. N.

15. Liberal, A., *The Commission and After*, p. 4.

16. *Ibid.*

17. See *The Tribune*, Lahore, Dec. 28, 1927.

18. *Ibid.*

representing our views, but they deny to us the right of participation in the responsibility of framing our constitution. I have no doubt that this Commission, even though it be presided over by Simon, will inspire no confidence and will command no public support.¹⁹

The excuse given for not appointing any Indian on the Commission was that the framers of the Act of 1919 intended to confine the Commission to only Members of Parliament. But it was a mere pretext.²⁰ The Act, it is obvious, did not specify any such restriction. But even if the British Government wanted to restrict the membership of the Statutory Commission to only the members of Parliament, the availability of two prominent Indians in the British Parliament was the relevant answer to this sudden and hasty decision of the Conservative Government. There were two well-known Indian members at the time in the British Parliament. One was Sir Satyendra Prasad Sinha, later Lord S. P. Sinha,²¹ and the other was Shapurji Saklatwala. In fact, S. P. Sinha had been closely connected with the various stages of the constitutional reforms in India and his inclusion as a member of the Commission would have been of great consequence.²²

These two Indian members were excluded from the Statutory Commission and ignored simply because of their race, and their exclusion thus saved the British Government from any future controversy and criticism which might have emanated from their prejudicial findings in the final recommendations of the Commission.²³ According to C. Y. Chintamani, the stamp of inferiority was fixed on the brow of Indians merely because they were not God's own Englishmen.²⁴ Their exclusion from the Commission left no doubt in their minds, that there was not to be found in India a statesman of sufficient calibre to sit in conference with men of the Commission. Thus the intense desire of Indians to convince themselves that they were the equals of the British, and

19. *Ibid.*

20. Chintamani, C. Y., *Indian Problems Since the Mutiny*, p. 171.

21. S. P. Sinha was a Member in the House of Lords.

22. Setalvad, C. H., *op.cit.*, p. 342.

23. Gopal, S., *Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin*, p. 19.

24. Chintamani, C. Y., *op.cit.*, p. 171.

their almost pathetic *amour-propre* were deeply affronted by this further implication of their unworthiness.

C. F. Andrews²⁵ who was instrumental in sponsoring the patriotic sentiments of Indians in their struggle for Swaraj, opined that Lord Birkenhead's statements and decision in regard to this vital matter was akin to that of 'a conqueror imposing his sway, upon a conquered and subject people.' He condemned it as an undemocratic action as it was like 'a racial superior acting with arrogance towards a racial inferior.'

There was another significant instance which focused the anger, resentment and criticism of the people of India still magnified. The fact that the Labour Party of England had agreed^{26,27} to serve on the Commission of this character gave to enlightened public opinion in India a very grave shock indeed. Lord Birkenhead's attitude and line of thinking were considered as unfavourable towards India, and it could hardly be appreciated that the British Labour Party of England would accord its open sanction; and support his policy and measures.²⁸

The selection of a Chairman for the Statutory Commission was anxiously discussed in Lord Birkenhead's private correspondence with the Viceroy.²⁹ By July 1927, he had agreed with the Prime Minister that Sir John Simon was by far the ablest man available. Birkenhead called John Simon a very adroit, patient, tactful, and a successful person imbued with great subtlety, acuteness, quickness, industry and tact.³⁰ In this regard, Ramsay

25. B. 1870; started his career as a lecturer in St. Stephen's College, Delhi; disciple of Gandhi, helped India in many ways, author of numerous books, d. 1940.

26, 27. Birkenhead wrote to Viceroy, 'My greatest anxiety at this end was relieved when Ramsay Macdonald consented to appoint two members of the Labour Party. If, under the influence of the extremists, he had refused to make an appointment, the situation would indeed have been serious, (Secretary of State to the Viceroy, Nov. 3, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

28. *Ibid.*

29. At one time Lord Hewart's name was proposed for Chairmanship of Statutory Commission. (Secretary of State to Viceroy Jan. 27, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

30. Secretary of State to Viceroy, June 16, June 23, 1927 and Jan. 1928, *Halifax Papers*. Lord Birkenhead and John Simon had been friends from their College days.

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MacDonald readily helped the Secretary of State in the choice of two more members from the Labour party in the persons of Stephen Walsh³¹ and Clement Richard Attlee, and on July 21, Lord Birkenhead was in a position to assure the Viceroy that the British cabinet had ratified his selection.

On receipt of information of the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, of course, began to guess in his mind about the probable outcome of the appointment of the Statutory Commission. He was confirmed in his opinion that such a Commission, if likely to produce a unanimous report, would have advantages that would outweigh the opposition it would create. He was quite sure that it would be badly received in India,³² that its appointment would unite all Hindu opinion in opposition, and that its failure to produce an agreed report would have the most damaging results. If such unanimity could not be achieved, he opined that a mixed Commission, although it would produce more than a report, would be far more favourably received; that it would diminish the probability of uniting all Indian opinion against the Commission, and that its minority report would be 'less injurious than one proceeding from a Parliamentary Commission.'³³

With all information in hand, the Viceroy was prepared to announce the appointment of the Statutory Commission. In preparation for the announcement, Lord Irwin invited a number of leaders of Indian political life to explain the decision of the British Government and the reasons for it.³⁴ The Viceroy had been spen-

31. A Labour Member of Parliament from Lancashire who soon resigned for reasons of ill-health and was replaced by Vernon Hartshorn (Home-Public, File 603, Jan. 5, 1928).

32. "The only alternative would, I think, be a mixed Commission, and this type of body would no doubt be more likely to receive a favourable reception from certain classes in India whose views cannot be considered negligible The Muslims almost certainly would not boycott and this will be bound to affect the decision of the Hindus. At the same time, the effects of the boycott would be serious and might gravely exacerbate the issues between British and Indian Opinion. (Irwin to Governor of Burma, June 15, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

The Viceroy further informed Viscount Halifax: There will accordingly be a great row, when the Government's procedure for the Commission is announced, but I hope this may gradually yield to more reasonable courses. (Viceroy to Viscount Halifax, Nov. 6, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.)

ding four or five days, rather unpleasant days, in trying to induce leaders of Indian opinion to be reasonable about the scheme of procedure suggested for the Statutory Commission.³³

In this regard, he informed V. J. Patel, President of the Legislative Assembly of India, and Dr. M. A. Ansari, of his willingness to meeting Gandhi. 'I cannot agree to any statement regarding subject matter of interview, as this would inevitably impair confidential character of meeting.'³⁴ Soon after he sent a telegram to Gandhi and Ansari in which he explained: "I am anxious to have a talk with you on certain important rather urgent matters, and if it is convenient to you, I should be very glad if you could come and see me in Delhi. The most convenient date for me would be Wednesday, November 2nd, at 11-30. I realize that I am giving you very short notice and that this must inevitably cause you inconvenience, but I hope it will not make it impossible for you to come. Please wire whether you can come on that date."³⁵

Gandhi had made the long journey from Mangalore in the South of India. Probably he came with the impression that his presence was needed to discuss the present unhappy communal situation in the country and he was, of course, ever anxious to impress on the authorities the economic value of his *Charkha* scheme.³⁶ It was at this meeting that Irwin met Gandhi for the first time, and found him 'an interesting personality.'³⁷ It is stated by one of Gandhi's biographers, Louis Fischer, that Irwin merely handed Gandhi the document announcing the impending arrival of an official British Commission led by John Simon to report on Indian conditions and make recommendations for political reforms.⁴⁰ The real point at issue was the nature of enquiry to

33. Birkenhead, Earl of; *Halifax Papers*, pp. 238-39.

34. The Earl of Halifax; *Fullness of Days*, p. 119.

35. Irwin to Viscount Halifax, November 6, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

36. Telegram of Irwin to Gandhi, Oct. 24, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Irwin wrote to Viscount Halifax: 'It was rather like talking to some one who had stepped off one planet on to this for a short visit of a fortnight, and whose whole mental outlook was quite other to that which was regulating most of affairs on the planet to which he had descended', (Irwin to Viscount Halifax, November 6, 1927, *Halifax Papers*).

39. See *Times of India*, Nov. 5, 1927.

40. Fischer, Louis, *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 273-74

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be undertaken by the Simon Commission and the best from in which the Indian opinion as expressed by the Central Legislature could be associated with it during the formative and final legislative stages. Soon thereafter, the Viceroy 'dismissed him with a few curt words', thus missing an opportunity of discussing the issues that lay between them.⁴¹ Gandhi was most disappointed, because he never imagined that the Simon Commission would form the dominant topic of discussion. If he had known this, probably he would have excused himself as his other engagements were very pressing.

The other Indian leaders were called only to be informed by the Viceroy that the nature of the Commission had already been finally decided upon by the British Government. Irwin's biographer, Alan Campbell Johnson, describes this episode as 'a deplorable lack of tact in the handling of the Indian leaders', who did not disguise from the Viceroy the fact that the Commission as constituted would be boycotted.⁴²

In fact, in undertaking such a step, the Viceroy was actuated by the desire to ensure that these leaders should be in possession of all and accurate facts and figures in regard to the momentous political decision taken by the Home Government in order that there might be no risk of their being taken by surprise and having to form their judgment on possibly misleading information. On official level, the Viceroy had confidential discussions, in this regard, with a Committee of the Government of India, consisting of S. R. Das, Sir Alexander Muddiman, Sir Basil Blackett and Sir John Thompson.⁴³ The Viceroy wrote to Governor of Punjab on October 20, 1927.

..... 'We must be careful to avoid giving the impression that we feel our case is weak one. If we appear to apologise for the Home Government's decision, we shall probably encourage Indian opinion to make a grievance of it, I see that there is a danger that extremists may be encouraged to take up an intransigent attitude if we give them ground for believing that we have a bad conscience in the matter and are callous about the consequences.'⁴⁴

41. *Ibid.*

42. See *Times of India*, Nov. 6, 1927.

43. Debates, Legislative Assembly, Vol. IV, Aug. 18, 1927.

44. Viceroy to Governor of Punjab, October 20, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

On November 7, 1927, the Secretary of State sent a 'private and personal' telegram to the Viceroy; 'Statutory Commission announcement 5 P.M. Indian time, Tuesday, November 8th. will be suitable time of release in India.'⁴⁵

The Viceroy gave an important announcement on November 8, 1927 in connection with the appointment of the Statutory Commission. He stated that the previous Statute enacted by the British Parliament eight years ago had regulated the conditions under which India might learn by actual experience, whether or not the western system of representative Government was the appropriate means through which she might attain responsible self-government and report upon the progress made in the past, the appointment of a Statutory Commission was thought to be essential at the end of ten years. The Commission was to be presided over by one whose public position was due to his outstanding ability, intelligence and character, and it was hoped that the Commission would bring fresh, unbiased, unaffected and impartial judgment to bear upon an immensely complex constitutional issue.

While appointing the Statutory Commission, it was not feasible, of course, to dictate to the Commission what procedure it should follow during its duration of investigations in India; but it was opined that its task in taking evidence would be greatly facilitated if it were to invite the Central Legislature to appoint a Joint Select Committee, chosen from its elected and nominated non-official members which would draw up its views and proposals in writing and lay them before the Commission for examination in such manner as the latter may decide. The Committee might remain for any consultation which the Commission might desire at subsequent stages of the enquiry. It was also suggested that a similar procedure should be adopted with the Provincial Legislatures.⁴⁷

This procedure of consulting Indian opinion was thought to be easy and effective and it was to assure to Indians a better opportunity than they could have enjoyed in any other way of influencing

45. Secretary of State to the Viceroy, November 7, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

46. Reforms Office, F. 15-17/Misc. 1929. See *Halifax Papers*: and *Times of India*, Nov. 10, 1927.

47. *Ibid*.

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the passage of these great events. Moreover, this procedure would enable them to express themselves freely to the Commission, and it would also be within their power to challenge in detail any of the proposals made by His Majesty's Government before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament, and thus to advocate their own solutions.⁴⁸

It was also made clear that when the Commission had reported and its report had been examined by the Government of India, it would be the duty of the latter to present proposals to Parliament to adopt those proposals without first giving a full opportunity for Indian opinion of different schools to contribute its view upon them.⁴⁹

It was decided that the Statutory Commission should proceed to India early in the next year. The purpose of this preliminary tour was not so much the intention of taking evidence as for the members to gain some experience of the working of legislatures, local-Government institutions, educational centres and any other public department which mainly concerned the problem they had been set to unravel and also to 'form in the mind's eye' a clear picture of Indian conditions with which they were asked to deal.⁵⁰

The following persons were appointed as members of the Statutory Commission.⁵¹

1. Sir John Allsebrook Simon⁵² (Chairman)
2. Viscount Burnham⁵³
3. Baron Strathcona⁵⁴
4. George Richard Land—Fox⁵⁵

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. Home—Public, F. 603, 1927 and Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 210, pp. 19 ff. Nov. 1927.

52. He was a celebrated constitutional lawyer in England.

53. A Member of the House of Lords.

54. A Member of the House of Lords. On his appointment as a member of the Statutory Commission for India, he relinquished his office as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party Organization. (*Times of India*, Nov. 9, 1927).

55. A Member of the House of Commons

5. Edward Cecil George Cadogan⁵⁶

6. Vernon Hartshorn⁵⁷

7. Clement Richard Attlee⁵⁸

J. W. Bhore and S. F. Steward were appointed as Secretaries of the Commission.⁵⁹

The Composition of the Statutory Commission was one for the decision of Parliament and His Majesty's Government,⁶⁰ and its procedure was settled by the Commission itself and did not form the subject of correspondence with the Governor-General-in-Council.⁶¹

On the 24th November, the resolution was moved in the House of Commons by Earl Winterton that the cost of the Commission would be borne by the Indian revenues, but His Majesty's Government would contribute a sum of £ 20,000 towards it.⁶² The Secretary of State also made it clear to the Viceroy that the Commission's hands should not only be free, but should be known to be free.⁶³

It was an affront to India to appoint a Parliamentary Commission and to exclude Indians. Indians were not prepared to accord welcome to such a Commission. A lot of agitation, criticism and anger were shown by the people of India soon after the announcement of the appointment of the Statutory Commission. Indeed, India was in the midst of a great political upheaval brought about by the announcement of an all-British Commission to work at the future constitution of India. Not only was the whole procedure proposed by the Government condemned by Indian leaders from the extreme left to the extreme right, but there was a clear indication that if the proposals were persisted in, the Government would have to reckon with a vigorous and widespread boycott.

56. A Member of the House of Commons and was the Secretary of the Speaker.

57. He replaced Stephen Walsh, (Home Pub. F. 603, 1927) and *Debates, House of Commons* Vol. 211, p. 1129, Nov.—Dec. 1927.

58. A Labour Member in the House of Commons.

59. Home, Public, F. 603, 1927.

60. Home Public, F. 1/15, 1928.

61. Home, Public, F. 1/70, 1928.

62. Home—Public, F. 603-1927.

63. Secretary of State to the Viceroy, Dec. 23, 1927, *Halifax Papers*.

British Colonial Attitudes Towards Indians in East Africa*

BY

HARVEY G. SOFF

Today in East Africa, Indians frequently face governmental actions that appear to be discriminatory, but those policies are an inheritance from Africa's former colonial masters. Throughout the period of British rule in East Africa, although the Indian was a dominant force in the economic and political life of the region,¹ he was also the object of racial discrimination by many colonial officials and European settlers acting under the guise of "Christianity and Civilization." The British accepted the Darwinian proposal of survival of the fittest, and moulded it with Spencerian Darwinism to justify their actions. It was a racist theory, and many Asians in East Africa believe that part of that ideology has been adapted by present East African regimes to meet the needs of their people. The governments of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, however, justify their actions towards Indians with an economic and nationalistic motive. Fascist tendencies have occasionally crept in, possibly due to thorough indoctrination during the era of political subservience to Europe, but the leaders of the East African nations have publicly denounced racism as subversive to the goals of modern Africa.

Indians have been associated with East Africa since earliest times, and it has been suggested that the consulate of Great Britain

* The term Indian refers to all people of the subcontinent. Although modern scholars often refer to them as Asians, Indian was the title during the colonial era, and it is used here for ease of clarification. When the word Asian or Asiatic is noted, it is intended as synonymous with the original "Indian".

1. For a brief description of Indian involvement in the economic development of East Africa see: Harvey G. Soff, "Indian Influence on Kenya's Nyanza Province, 1900-1925," *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLVI, Part III, No. 138, December 1968, pp. 369-386.

was established there primarily to protect her Indian subjects.² Once European domination was established, relations between the government and Indian immigrants were often cordial, although there were many instances of European intolerance toward them. As early as 1893, Sir Harry Johnston visualised Africa divided into sectors with both North and South Africa settled by "white and whiteish races," but tropical Africa "must be ruled by whites, developed by Indians, and worked by blacks."³ Sir Harry did not foresee the eventual difficulties such a program would create, but he anticipated the need for Indian involvement in East Africa. All administrators did not feel, as Sir Harry did, that Indians were a welcome addition to the population of eastern Africa. Francis Hall's attitude indicated the trend for many other officials and settlers. Hall believed that the Indians in Africa were the refuse of India, the criminal element of society, and prone to stealing and raiding.⁴

Sir Frederick Jackson paternised Indians on rare occasions, but generally condemned their culture, appearance, and insubordination. The Indian community, Sir Frederick believed, "apart from the squalor ... were crowded with prostitutes, small boys, and other accessories to the bestial vices so commonly practised by Orientals ... there were rumors of the Lumbwa becoming restive on account of so many of their young women being inveigled away from their homes, and harboured in those sinks of iniquity."⁵ One day while riding a mule along the road between the Molo River and Nakuru, Jackson met an Indian. When he did not step out of the path and acknowledge Jackson as a superior white man, Jackson's porter frightened him so that he ran off. Sir Frederick later wrote that the victim was an "insolent ex-coolie," although he never spoke to the man to determine his occupation or ancestry. Jackson also questioned the argument advanced by many Indians

2. M. R. Dilley, *British Policy in Kenya Colony* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1937), p. 11.

3. Philip Mason, *The Birth of a Dilemma* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 214.

4. Francis (Frank) Hall to his Father, 15 Aug. 1899. Letters, in *Hall Papers*, Rhodes House, Oxford.

5. Sir Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London: Arnold, 1930), p. 325.

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that they had been responsible for opening the interior to civilization. Prior to the advent of the Imperial British East Africa Company, Jackson doubted if Indians had any share in the development of the country and denied that before 1900 Indian *dukas* had been built inland. At the same time, however, Jackson did not also admit that Europeans had refused to venture into the interior to establish trading posts. Although most Indians were categorized as inferior and insolent, Jackson wondered where a person could meet "in India, or out of it, a more charming little old gentleman than Alidina Visram."⁶

Until 1902 when the Uganda Railway reached Kisumu, on Lake Victoria, Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, the Marquess of Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne, had continually advised the Commissioners in East Africa to approve and promote immigration of Indians. Several schemes for the settlement of Indians in the Kenya highlands and other areas were submitted by George Mackenzie, a former director of the IBEA Co., and George Whitehouse, Chief Engineer of the Uganda Railway.⁷ Their proposals were not implemented, and it was not until the Railway was completed that the local government took intensive measures to increase non-African habitation in East Africa. European homesteads were allotted primarily to provide sufficient freights for the railways in order to recover the enormous funds spent in its construction. In the earliest stages, the Home government had no preference concerning the national origin of colonists; in 1903 it recommended that a grant of 5,000 square miles be made to East European Zionists.⁸

By 1902 restriction of Indian settlement on the Kenya highlands became the official unwritten policy. Commissioner Charles Eliot of the East Africa Protectorate became the leading proponent of a white colony that he hoped would eventually be granted self-government. Eliot acted in accord with several white settlers

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-7.

7. Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa, A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 67-68.

8. Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), p. 820.

in the Protectorate, and although there were less than three dozen, they were able to form a strong bond that negated the Zionist proposal and thwarted ideas Indians had about farming in the highlands. During January 1902, a group of Europeans formed an association to dissuade Indian immigration, and requested government assistance in influencing Africans to become servants on European plantations.⁹ This Society to Promote European Immigration had Eliot's support, and he recommended that the Foreign Office limit Indian areas to the lowlands where the climate was unhealthy for Europeans. Eliot believed that "the East Africa Highlands are for the most part a white man's country and [hoped] that they will be taken up by white colonists in the near future."¹⁰ He further stipulated that it was not in the best interests of the colony to permit large number of Indians into the highlands.

In 1901 Jackson became Deputy Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, and eventually developed a land policy in opposition to Eliot's. Jackson issued a circular in August 1902 that permitted Indian occupation of small plots along the railway, with the exception of land lying between Kiu and Fort Ternan. Ironically, this attempt to allow limited Indian occupation of the highlands, was also the first official restriction against their holding prime rural areas. As late as 1910, although several Indians and Goans had been granted plots of 10 acres each in the vicinity of Nairobi, within the township itself only 238 acres had been allocated them.¹¹ This insignificant figure, when compared to estates of over 100,000 acres for Lord Delamere and Major E. Grogan, indicate the discriminatory reaction the local government exhibited toward Indian attempts to own land in the highlands. Jackson opposed Eliot's scheme during 1903 and 1904, and found the idea of a white man's country inconceivable. Jackson did not want Indian settlement to replace or equal European, but if Europeans were to make the highlands their private domain, thousands of Kikuyu would be forcibly moved, and Jackson opposed this action.

9. Eliot to Lansdowne, 21 Jan. 1902. F.O. 2/566.

10. Eliot to Landowne, 5 Jan. 1902. F.O. 2/566.

11. M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* (Nairobi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 162.

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Eliot's land policy was never sufficiently disputed, and in August 1902 he issued an official Notice that advertised homesteads for sale or lease. Due to the liberal terms of Eliot's land policy, European immigration into the Protectorate increased considerably in 1903, and by April of that year, over 130 Europeans had obtained land grants.¹² Eliot also recruited settlers from South Africa, and until the commencement of World War I, South Africans formed a majority of the non-African population in the highlands. Eliot succumbed to the segregation wishes of the settlers, and after 1902 the Land Office refused to consider Asian applications for land within the highlands outside the limits of Nairobi.

After he left East Africa, Eliot described his attitudes towards non-European colonization in East Africa. "Now that there is a steady influx of European English-speaking settlers," he said, "I deprecate the . . . grant of land to Indians in the highlands." Eliot justified his attitude because the highlands were not "really congenial to Indians." They did not appreciate the climate, and since most Indians were not farmers, fertile land would be wasted.¹³ The Europeans, however, valued the temperate climate of the highlands, and were willing to carve out an agricultural empire.

During his tenure in East Africa, Eliot had not issued legislation or rules under the Crown Lands Ordinance that ordained racial qualifications for land grants. In September 1903, A. M. Jeevanjee, an outstanding Indian contractor, applied for land but the land officer felt that Jeevanjee might attempt to secure, through devious means, a large freehold grant, and he asked Eliot for a ruling. Eliot responded that Indians and Europeans should be segregated, and "it was better not to grant any large holdings to Indians between, say, Machakos Road and Fort Ternan."¹⁴ Until July 1906 this memorandum provided the basis for land distribution in the central highlands.

12. Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

13. Sir Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London: Arnold, 1905), pp. 179, 309.

14. Quoted in Sorrenson, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

Eliot accepted a common misconception that Indians sent all their money out of Africa to support their families in India and although the Indian was willing to trade in foreign lands, they never became full citizens or developers. This idea pervades East Africa today, and has been adopted by many scholars. In his recent volume, however, Robert G. Gregory has differentiated between Muslim and Hindu Indians, and suggests that the trader, usually a Muslim, did not come to Africa on a temporary basis.¹⁵ Instead, he arrived with his family and presently many Indian merchants in East Africa are second and third generation.

In 1904 Eliot was succeeded by Sir Donald Stewart who followed the basic structure left by Eliot. During October 1904, Stewart appointed a Land Committee of five Europeans to investigate segregation in the highlands. The Committee was dominated by Delamere. Hearings were held and only eight Indians were allowed to present evidence. They criticized Eliot and Stewart for disregarding earlier promises that no segregation would be tolerated by the Government. European witnesses, however, strongly applauded the policy of Eliot and Stewart and were unanimous in recommending the continued prohibition on Indian estates in the non-urban areas of the highlands. The "Delamere" Committee refused to acknowledge Indian requests and approved European proposals. The Committee Report stated that there was "no objection to the general proposition that Indians should hold land in the Protectorate, but considering that only a comparatively small area of the Protectorate is suitable for European settlement and colonization it is desirable that the land within the area should be reserved for the support and maintenance of a white population."¹⁶ Stewart seconded the Committee's finding and recommended their acceptance to the Colonial Office.

When Stewart died suddenly on October 1, 1905, he was temporarily succeeded by Jackson, until the arrival of Sir James Hayes Sadler in December. Sadler had a distinguished career in India, and early in 1906 he addressed a meeting of 70 Indian merchants in Mombasa, and spoke to them in Gujarati. Although Sadler had a fondness for Indians, he was unable to reverse the

15. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

16. *Report of the Land Committee, 1905*, p. 15.

policy of his predecessors since Delamere and the settlers exerted great pressure on him. European resentment against Sadler was so intense, that Delamere demanded his resignation, and the Commissioner was nicknamed "flannelfoot."

Indian agitation began to develop under the Sadler administration. Although he had recommended to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, that a Legislative Council be formed with Indian representation, it was not until June 1909 that A. M. Jeevanjee was appointed the first Indian member of that body. Jeevanjee's English was poor and his efforts to represent Indians justly was denied when he was not allowed to bring an interpreter with him to Legislative sessions. The selection of Jeevanjee was not the first effort that Indians had made to achieve political and economic equality. In 1900 an Indian Association had been formed in Mombasa, and by 1906 a similar group was organised in Nairobi under the leadership of Alidina Visram. In April 1906, President Jeevanjee of the Mombasa Association, raised over Rs. 20,000 within two hours to finance the presentation of Indian grievances to the government.¹⁷ The Indians, however, in spite of their protestations, were continually denied ownership of land in the highlands, and were forced to seek farmland either on the seacoast or Kibos—a small agricultural settlement near Lake Victoria.

The Colonists Association, under the leadership of Delamere voiced discontent at government inaction, demanded the acceptance of the findings of the Land Committee, and submitted a resolution that insisted on the exclusion of Indians from the highlands. Sadler submitted their request to Elgin, and at the same time supported them with previous statements by Jackson and Eliot. Elgin approved Sadler's recommendations and issued what became known as the Elgin pledge:

I have to request that you will cause the Colonists Association to be informed that it would not be in accordance with the policy of His Majesty's Government to exclude any class of His subjects from holding land in any part of a

17. W. McGregor Ross, *Kenya From Within: A Short Political History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1927), p. 303.

British Protectorate; but that, in view of the comparatively limited area in the Protectorate suitable for European colonization, a reasonable discretion will be exercised in dealing with applications for land on the part of natives of India and other non-Europeans.... land outside municipal limits, roughly lying between Kiu and Fort Ternan, should be granted to European settlers.¹⁸

The Elgin pledge did not place legal restrictions against the Indian securing property, but it became a matter of administrative practice to refuse allocation of rural farmland to Indians. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 did not prevent Indians from purchasing land, but as late as 1938 Lord Hailey noted that in practice only Europeans were granted the acreage in question. Furthermore, the transfer of land from persons of one race to those of another required government sanction, and it became impossible for a European to sell to an Indian.¹⁹ In addition to his proposal for a white man's country in central Kenya, Lord Delamere visualised a great European colony stretching from the highlands to the Cape "and governed for His Majesty by a true Afrikaner bond."²⁰

All British officials did not support the view of white settlers. Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, made a safari to East Africa and became a leading proponent of Indian contributions, although his proposals never gained sufficient momentum in the Colonial Office. Churchill emphasized that the Indian was a British subject, and was entitled to all rights such status included. He knew that the Indian had been responsible for the military pacification of the colony, had labored to build the Railway, and pioneered in virgin areas.²¹ European settlement was a result of the Uganda Railway, and the Railway was created by Indian labor. The advance of both races into central Kenya, therefore, depended on each other. Churchill also foresaw inequities when he wrote that, "There are already in

18. Elgin to Sadler, Confidential, 17 July 1906. C.O. 533/14.

19. Hailey, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

20. Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935), p. 206.

21. Winston Churchill, *My African Journey* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), pp. 49-50.

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miniature all the elements of keen political discord, all, the materials for hot and acrimonious debate. The white man versus the black; the Indian versus both."²² He did not, however, visualise the most significant racial discontent: the relationship of Indian and African after European withdrawal.

Churchill's defense of Indians in East Africa was inadequate, and they remained subject to vindictive charges by many Europeans. Delamere criticised the Indian police force in Kenya by relating that Africans had told him that they had been able to escape punishment by bribing dishonest Indians.²³ Such accusations by Delamere might have seemed insignificant, but similar charges were voiced by Jackson in official dispatches to Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1910-1915. Jackson condemned Indians for being immoral, dishonest, insanitary, and the causal agent for disease in Nairobi.²⁴ Jackson refused to admit that he was biased. It was simply a matter of class structure, and Indians were of a lower stratum. Jackson was not precise in his remarks to Harcourt. Most traders in Nairobi were representatives of established Indian families at Mombasa, not lower class itinerants. Although many did not practice the type of personal hygiene the British would have preferred, the fact that the administration forced Indians to locate in the flat plains of Nairobi, without proper drainage, caused a severe health hazard. Indians lived in swampy lowlands, while Europeans thrived in healthy hills surrounding the city.²⁵

Although Lord Lugard was not a proponent of Indian settlement in the highlands, he understood why many Indians believed that they were entitled to equal rights. Europeans claimed that the government had solicited them to set along the railway, but Indians were also invited, as labourers and traders. Lugard condemned those Asiatics who resided in East Africa on a temporary basis. In 1908 he wanted Indian colonists, not transients.²⁶

22. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

23. Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

24. Jackson to Harcourt, 25 Nov. 1910. C.O. 533/78.

25. Sorrenson, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

26. Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: Wm. Blackwood, 1922), p. 320.

Polarised views on Indians were voiced by Grogan, a leading rancher, and Jeevanjee. By 1910 Grogan had amassed an estate of approximately 100,000 acres and was opposed to Indian residence. He acknowledged that a few were "decent" and "intelligent", but the remainder were corrupt and immoral. Those who were honest had a right to do business in Kenya, but "they had no right to control it; the Empire owed it to South Africa to keep them out."²⁷ Jeevanee, on the other hand, stated that, "I have made the country. All the best property in Nairobi belongs to me. I built all the Government buildings and leased them to the Administration. I built all the hospitals and post offices between Mombasa and Port Florence. I was the sole contractor on the Uganda Railway."²⁸ The European community and the local and Home governments refused to listen to him. Sir Percy Girouard, Governor of Kenya from 1909-1912, placed the strength of his office behind the European colonists and opposed Indian agriculture in the highlands as well as at Kibos. Girouard was willing to concede land to Indians only along the coast, and had tried to postpone the appointment of Jeevanjee to the Legislative Council.²⁹ In 1910 Jeevanjee did secure his seat, but resigned the following year and Indians were without representation on the Legislative Council until 1919. During that interim period, the government claimed that there were no Indians qualified for the position. By 1912 pressure against Indians had been successful, because the Governor reported that Indian expansion had been halted, and a constant flow of European immigrants were entering East Africa.³⁰

The firm establishment of European control in East Africa was partly the result of the policies of Harcourt and his predecessor, the Earl of Crewe. Administrators who appeared sympathetic to Indians were transferred to posts outside East Africa. Sadler was sent to the Windward Islands in 1909, and Governor Hesketh Bell of Uganda, who vehemently opposed European settlement in his colony, was sent to Nigeria to permit Girouard to come to Kenya. Girouard's successor, Sir Henry Belfield, also supported European

27. Dilley, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

28. Quoted in Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2.

29. Girouard to Crewe, Telegram, 23 Sept. 1909. C.O. 533/62.

30. *Report on British East Africa*, 1912. Enclosure in Girouard to Harcourt, Confidential, 19 Feb. 1912. C.O. 533/102.

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paramountcy in the Kenya Highlands, and after a decade, European control of Kenya was solidly entrenched.³¹

During the years immediately preceding World War I, the topic of Indian contributions to East Africa was again commonly discussed. The Royal African Society printed that Indian "petty traders introduced, and are still maintaining, a great civilising influence amongst the primitive savages; the weight of their presence in the development of the country is shown."³² The government and the majority of the British population were unwilling to accept the theories of the Society, and instead avowed the work of Lord Cranworth who detested Indians. Cranworth wrote that the Indians in Africa were riff-raff, immoral and detrimental to everyone. Indians were able to survive without food, were insanitary, and made no use of soap or clean clothes. Cranworth also claimed that Indians sold goods at below cost, but made up for this loss by selling other merchandise on the black market or by other illicit activities. The Indian was also accused of running countless houses of prostitution, gambling, and accepting stolen goods. "There is hardly a crime among natives that is not traceable to the Indian."³³ Such slanderous remarks, made without foundation, became the hallmark of European attitudes towards Indians, and in the present era, many Africans refer to *all* Indians as dishonest leeches who are robbing East Africa of her wealth.

The Indian has often been accused by Britons for being part of a society that prefers to segregate itself, is anti-social and not willing to accept European advice. Beginning in 1912, not only were most of the highlands reserved solely for Europeans, but certain residential areas were demarcated as strictly European. Occupation of residences was limited to Europeans, and sales of property were allotted only to European bidders. This allowed the development of a residential segregation and was opposed by the Indian community. Indians remained isolated, not only because

31. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

32. E. H. Sadler, "Notes on the Geography of British East Africa," *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. II, 1911-1912, p. 186.

33. Lord Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making, or Sport and Profit in East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 62-64.



they wished to remain a cohesive unit, but because they had no choice.

On March 7, 1914, the East Africa Indian National Congress was formed to protest the unfair treatment that Indians were receiving in public services, as well as economic and political discrimination. Belfield was not sympathetic with their grievances, and the ensuing War allowed him to dismiss their demands in favor of the war effort. During the next several years, the position of Indians in East Africa reached its nadir.³⁴ Most interested parties had partly acknowledged the contribution of the Asiatic trader to the economy, but during the War even that aspect of Indians in East Africa was condemned. The South Kavirondo Annual Report stated that, "It is regrettable and disheartening to find how unenterprising the two Indian shopkeepers in Kisii are—they as a rule have only small stocks and their shops though being shockingly examples of evil-smelling tin shanties cannot at present be done anything with, owing to the Land Office having extended the time in which permanent shops have to be erected."³⁵ The War caused a high increase in the cost of import, and it is not difficult to understand how a petty trader, working on a profit margin of pennies, was not able to fully stock a store. In addition, since government permits were temporary, it is unreasonable to assume that a small merchant would risk the large investment necessary to construct a permanent shop, only to have his license and permit revoked the following year.

In 1917 a local economic commission was appointed by Belfield. The commission included Delamere and Grogan, as well as six other Europeans. No Indians were represented, and Indians were not summoned to testify. The Commission accused Asiatics of stifling the economic growth of the country by prohibiting African participation in business. The Report of the commission did not include, however, information on the European exploitation of Africans, but showed the Indians as uncivilized and below the level of Africans. Indians were, in fact, a detriment to the development of Africans, and the Commission re-

34. Gregory, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-4.

35. *South Kavirondo Annual Report*, 1914-1915, p. 20.

commended halting further Indian immigration.³⁶ This prejudicial report was presented to Viscount Milner, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and although he and Parliament rejected it, bitterness increased among the Indian community. Milner, however, did not adopt a policy of racial segregation in the townships, but insisted that no ban be placed on Indian immigration or their obtaining land outside the highlands.³⁷

When World War I ended, many Asiatics in East Africa and India demanded that the former German colony of Tanganyika be entrusted to them, and only then would the racial situation in East Africa ease. Speaking at the Legislative Council meeting in November 1918, Delamere stipulated that he did not wish to see Colonial Office interference in East Africa, and he defended Indian participation on the Council. His motives indicated expediency, not humanity. It was designed to permit the Indian community to remain abreast of affairs of state, but not intended to allow Indians "to entrench one iota on the rights of the Britons to govern a British colony."³⁸ When Tanganyika became a British mandate, Delamere, Grogan, and over a dozen other settlers, issued a petition that denounced Indian aspirations in Tanganyika. The Europeans stated that it would be better for the Africans to return to German control than be governed by Indians. Such an opinion was then adopted unanimously in the Legislative Council. The hopes and demands of the Indians were again ignored primarily because of settler agitation. The Colonial Government spoke of equal rights for all British subjects, but continued to allow Kenya to discriminate because of race and colour. In Tanganyika, however, over the protests of Kenyans such as Delamere and Grogan, Indians did improve their position. The British government sold a large proportion of the land to them and several also gained control of former German import and export firms. Soon the retail trade of the country was controlled by Indians, and several became large-scale farmers and ginnery operators employing many Africans. Indians may have supplied

36. *Economic Commission, Final Report*, Part I, 1919, p. 21.

37. *Government Notice* 281, 18 Aug. 1920.

38. *Legislative Council Minutes*, Novemer, 1918, pp.40.

approximately 30 per cent. of the total capital invested in agriculture.³⁹ This figure is significant when considering the charges levelled by Kenya that Indians would not appreciate the climate and soil of the fertile highlands because they were not farmers, but petty traders. Also, the largest sugar estates and refineries in Uganda were owned and managed by Indians. The terms of the Tanganyika mandate aided Indian advancement since discrimination was absent in the laws of the Mandate Commission.

Major-General Sir Edward Northey, who had served in East Africa during the War, was Governor of Kenya from 1919 until he was recalled three years later. Indians were demanding equal representation in the Legislative Council, but Northey, in the tradition of his predecessors, denied their request. He insisted that European jurisdiction over the government was imperative and most Indians were not qualified to vote.⁴⁰ When Churchill became Secretary of State for the Colonies, he recalled Northey and replaced him with Sir Robert Coryndon, the former Governor of Uganda. The settlers believed that Northey had been relieved because he opposed Churchill's position on the Indian question. In 1920 Coryndon had proposed the appointment of one Indian to the Legislative Council of Uganda. Indians in that colony far outnumbered Europeans, and the Indian community rejected a Council on which they would have only half the European vote. Equal representation was demanded, and it was six years before the first Indian took his seat in Council. Gradually more members were added to the Council, but the first African was not appointed until after World War II.

During the early 1920s, suffrage rights for Indians in Kenya became a controversial topic, particularly to white settlers led by Delamere. In 1921 Indians numbered 22,822, and they demanded equal representation with Europeans. They were offered communal voting, and the government of India issued a harsh objection. The Colonial and India Offices compromised in the Wood-Winterton proposals giving common electoral roll to Indians based on property and educational qualifications. This denied the fran-

39. Hailey, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

40. *Legislative Council Minutes*, 24 Feb. 1919, p. 3.

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chise to over 90% of the potential voters. As an attempt to compensate, open immigration for Indians was recommended. Delamere and his followers viewed the Wood-Winterton Agreement as impairing their privileged position, and they threatened armed rebellion while Delamere led a committee to London to air grievances.⁴¹

The Indians reacted to the Wood-Winterton Agreement by contesting the land laws of the highlands, and managed to purchase several acres from white settlers leaving East Africa. Other homesteaders became enraged at this incursion in 'their country,' and armed Europeans were often seen leading patrols through Indian districts of Nairobi. Out of fear, many *dukas* closed, and Coryndon became the target for a possible kidnapping by unhappy Europeans. Delamere became leader of the insurgents, and it appeared that the Home Government was unable to enforce its laws.⁴² A truce was finally arranged between the local government and settlers, and the new Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Devonshire, arranged for a discussion in London. Coryndon went with a European and Indian delegation. The Duke issued a White Paper in July 1923 that proclaimed "native paramountcy" as the primary goal of British rule in East Africa.

In 1922 Lugard published *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, and he proposed a solution to the "Indian Question." Lugard stated that Indians, as British subjects, should have equality with other settlers without segregation and discrimination in either land, politics, or education. The European settlers tenaciously opposed any concessions to Indians and defended separation primarily because of sanitation conditions. Lugard viewed the situation in East Africa as similar to Nyasaland and South Africa, and foresaw racial and economic rivalries unless adequate preventive measures were taken. Lugard's answer was to define "the area to be appropriated to British settlement, and granting to the settlers within that area representative government leading up eventually to that complete self-government

41. Hailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5.

42. Sir Geoffrey Archer, *Personal and Historical Memoirs of an East African Administrator* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), p. 152.

which a virile and progressive British colony may rightly claim."⁴³ His recommendations favored the Europeanization of Kenya, and were unacceptable to the Asians who did not desire a restricted area, but preferred an intermingling of the races. Lugard assumed that Indians disagreed with his solution because they were not settlers and colonists.

Another publication of the 1920s written by a colonial officer and widely read, was C. W. Hobley's *Kenya, From Chartered Company to Crown Colony*. Hobley had spent many years in East Africa, and in 1929 released his recollections which severely criticised Indians. According to Hobley, Indians were responsible for the creation of towns in Africa, and towns were "sanctuaries for youths who wish to avoid tribal obligations." Instead of running to the urban areas, Hobley preferred that Africans work under contract on European farms. On the coast, Indian financiers often assumed control of plantations when the indebted owner failed to meet his monetary obligations. As a result, except for Mombasa, the coast had decreased in importance. Hobley believed that Indians lived "in an atmosphere of intrigue.... It was curious to discover that old European residents on the coast occasionally became infested with the virus, through close contact with the Asiatic mind." In spite of the unfortunate influence of Indians on the coast, Hobley felt that since Europeans and Asians lived peacefully at Mombasa, it should be a model for upcountry relations. It was the militancy of the Indian segment, Hobley stipulated, that created the "Indian Question" for political purposes. Hobley did not desire to see an Indian representative in the Legislative Council unless there were at least 500 registered Indians based on property and educational standards, and educational qualifications included a working knowledge of both written and oral English.⁴⁴ Although Hobley did not elaborate on adequate property or income requirements, it is apparent that a majority of Indians in East Africa would not have met the minimum standards for the franchise since the average Indian trader paid annual rental fees of Rs. 150 for each *duka* and his income often was only Rs. 180 per annum.

43. Lugard, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

44. C. W. Hobley, *Kenya, From Chartered Company to Crown Colony* (London: Witherby, Ltd., 1929), pp. 148, 168, 230, 241.

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The disposition of settlers, Lugard, Hobley, and other colonial officers who vilified Indians was ennnanced by Julian Huxley when he compiled *Africa View* in 1931 after his visit to East Africa. Huxley did not consider himself a racist, but wanted all Indians removed from Africa "because their presence at once trebles the number of racial problems." The British had an obligation to the African, and that was to educate him to secure adequate governmental positions that were then held by Asiatics. Huxley did not, however, envision Africans securing administrative posts controlled by Europeans. Huxley also blamed them for most of the illness and depredation in Mombasa: "The Negroes are willing to learn and have a natural barbaric cleanliness; the Indians do not want to change any of their ways, and combine an ancient civilization with squalor." Wherever Huxley travelled, he claimed people reinforced his facts about the uncleanness of Indians.⁴⁵

When Sir Edward Grigg was Governor of Kenya during the late 1920s, his main objective was the formation of a closer union with Uganda and Tanganyika. In his farewell address, however, he showed the patronizing attitude common to many British administrators. Grigg confessed his fondness for various Indians in Kenya; the Lorry Driver, the *duka-walla*, the hardworking peasant. He hoped that Indians would soon change their feelings of not being "friends." He assured them that "friendliness on their part will always meet with friendliness on the part of the other communities." Years later Grigg propounded that international communism was the force behind the Mau Mau uprising and that outside forces were responsible for unrest among Kenya's Indians during his tenure.⁴⁶

Perhaps the most significant African volume of the 1930's was Lord Hailey's, *An African Survey*. By 1938 the Asian population of Kenya numbered almost 40,000. They had a powerful Indian Association with numerous local branches, comprised three of ten unofficial members on the Legislative Council, and were the principal agents of trade in the country. Hailey found that although the

45. Julian Huxley, *Africa View* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933), pp. 26, 162, 419-20.

46. Lord Altrincham, *Kenya's Opportunity* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1955), p. 296.

question of land rights in the highlands was still a troublesome issue, Indians desired homesteads only for status, not for potential agricultural use. The Indians had made contributions to East Africa, but Hailey foresaw serious problems in the future. He saw that it was impossible for Kenya to survive without Indian artisans and traders but realised that if Africans became skilled, the Indian population would suffer. "It is possible," he said, "that in the near future Indians will have to face more substantial difficulties. The gradual increase in the number of educated Africans is bound to result in increasing competition with Indians." Once the African was educated, Hailey rationalised that he would replace the Indian in government and in business.⁴⁷

Hailey disagreed with the practice of barring Indians, regardless of economic and educational attainment, from European clubs and hotels. The situation in Kenya is much the same today, except that Asians control many clubs and Africans do not have access to them. A case in point: At the meeting of the Mombasa Rotary Club in March 1970, approximately 100 persons attended a dinner and party. Of that total number, one African man and one African woman were present. It seems as difficult for Africans to cross the colour barrier today in their own independent country, as it was for Indians two decades ago.⁴⁸

During the entire colonial period prior to World War II, administrators and Africans, regardless of their feelings towards Indians as a race, understood the basic value of trade conducted by Indians. After the War, however, attitudes began to change, and the Indian was viewed, particularly in Uganda, as a potential political rival who might permanently exclude the African from power. The administration began an intensive program of training Africans to enter retail businesses prior to independence.⁴⁹ By 1949 the unofficial part of the Legislative Council was composed of three Europeans and three Asians, plus four Africans, and the

47. Hailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 336-341.

48. The author and his wife were the guests of the Rotary Club of Mombasa at a dinner party during March 1970, and during the 4 hours of festivities, they were the only persons to socialise with the blacks.

49. H. S. Morris, *The Indians in Uganda* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 144.

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following year African representation doubled, while European and Asian membership increased by one person each, and in 1953 African representation reached twenty with eleven Europeans and eight Asians.⁵⁰ Asians still did not experience equal representation with Europeans by the dawn of Independence.

In 1959 the conflict between Indians and Africans in Uganda reached a climax resulting in a boycott movement. The Uganda National Movement was organized and became a combination of prominent Ganda politicians, traditionalists, and residents of the infamous Katwe suburb of Kampala. A general boycott of Asian businesses was established, and anyone who did not observe it was punished. Considerable damage to property and person occurred. Although the colonial government exiled many rebels to Northern Province, and parts of Buganda were placed under martial law, the boycott continued into 1960.⁵¹ When the disturbances were finally squelched, bitterness between Africans and Indians remained, and they were left to settle their differences because the colonial government shortly withdrew from Uganda. When independence for Uganda appeared imminent, many Asians were pessimistic about their future. They knew that it would be more difficult for them to influence an independent black government than the colonial administration.

In Kenya, Indian agitation since the first years of the twentieth century had questioned the validity of a white man's country. As late as the mid 1950's a European movement was organised, The Federal Independence Party, to establish a system of racial segregation in Kenya similar to South Africa's apartheid. The FIP was not successful, and its failure may partially be credited to Indian refusal to surrender their rights, particularly political rights: the essence of FIP platforms.⁵²

Following independence in the early 1960s, East African governments generally followed the racial pattern initiated by the British. Open and direct discrimination was not propagated, but

50. H. F. Morris and James S. Read, *Uganda: The Development of its Laws and Constitution* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1966), pp. 27, 51.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

52. John S. Roberts, *A Land Full of People: Life in Kenya Today* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), pp. 110-111.

subtle manoeuvres were initiated to drive Asians out of Africa. The Constitution of Uganda gave protection against deprivation of property without compensation, but non-citizens are not given equal protection under the law. Asians who did not take advantage of government edicts to apply for African citizenship in the first years of independence are now realising that their residence in East Africa is in jeopardy. The governments are posting notice that all non-citizens must vacate permanent businesses within a certain period of time. Frequently, the Asiatic is not able to dispose of his property satisfactorily, and he virtually gives it away to the government. The business is then taken over by indigenous Africans with little training, and within a few months the *duka* is forced to close due to bankruptcy. The country has not only lost an Asiatic, but a former business is permanently closed. In Uganda, black Kenyans were generally permitted to sell souvenirs on the sidewalks in front of larger hotels, but in 1970 the Ugandan government expelled them in order to benefit Ugandans. The process of Africanization has reached the stage of Ugandization, Kenyaization, Tanzaniaization. The exodus of Asians as generally supported by the "common man" in Africa who still views the Indian as unsympathetic to his needs. Asians do not often give Africans jobs in their small shops, and are then accused of robbing the ignorant African peasant. In *dukas* where Asians have hired local Africans to work, the Asian generally treats his employee as an inferior, not an equal. In most Asian shops, regardless of the number of Africans waiting for service, if a non-African enters he will receive immediate attention. Such treatment creates unrest and distrust on the part of Africans. The Asians can ease the problem themselves, by securing African help, treating them with fairness, and eventually incorporating the African as a partner. This may seem an impossibility for the small trader, but if his economic monopoly is not voluntarily ended, he will have nothing.

Modern leaders of East Africa have discussed the Asians in their countries and their published opinions are commendable, but do not seem to form the basis for real situations. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania has worked for the development of his nation by Tanzanians, "though they will not all be black Tanzanians." His nation is a socialist country, "But the man or woman who hates 'Jews,' or 'Asiatics,' or 'Europeans,' of even 'West Europeans'

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and Americans,' is not a socialist he is denying the equality and brotherhood of man." If anyone divides the people of his country into good and bad groups based on race or place of origin, Nyerere charges sabotage. "We should decide whether a person is efficient in a particular job," he said, "whether he is honest, and whether he is carrying out his task loyally."⁵³ Nyerere's ideals are not always carried out. Many Asiatics are leaving Tanzania today because their applications for citizenship are not being honestly processed and because of undue pressure from the central government. For example, Tanzania is attempting to socialise the legal profession, and Asian attorneys who do not wish to work under government wages have no alternative but to leave, whether they are citizens or not.

Throughout East Africa, strikes are called by Africans demanding a larger share in their economic future. On February 17, 1970, about 150 workers in the workshop of General Motors in Kampala began a sit-down strike and demanded a revision of their work grade, dismissal of Ken Elvy the workshop manager, and K. D. Patel, an accountant, and the Africanization of important posts. The workers believed that since Africans were adequately trained, Elvy should be fired; he had served his purpose to Uganda.⁵⁴

The late Tom Mboya was sympathetic to the struggle of his fellow Kenyans, but he was possibly the most far-sighted of modern legislators in Africa. In 1962 he told the Kenya Indian Congress that, "There is no intention to replace present privilege with African privilege," but that Africanization was imperative. He also criticised the Indian community for not allowing African participation in social events, and went so far as to suggest inter-racial marriage. Mboya viewed such marriages as a blending of Kenyans, rather than separate peoples. The Asian community, however, has not accepted Mboya's solution. Sympathetically, Mboya realised that unlike Europeans, Asians had no other home to return to and he strongly recommended rapid and total integration in business. Asians viewed that proposal as an attempt at

53. Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 258-260.

54. *Uganda Argus*, February 18, 1970.

Africanization and elimination of Asian merchants. Mboya's scheme did not include all Asians in Kenya. Those who had applied for citizenship would be permitted to remain. When few Asians applied for citizenship during the first year of independence, Mboya and the rest of black Africa questioned Asian sincerity, particularly those who talked about being Kenyans, but did little to prove it. The test of sincerity, he said, was "has he given up everything else to become a Kenya citizen? Is he with us in the same melting pot?"⁵⁵ Asians who did not agree to participate in new Kenya have found themselves subject to the same treatment that many received before independence—discrimination.

Another legislator who has cried for Africanization and who has been condemned as racist, is Member of Parliament Mr. Clement Lubembe. Lubembe has stated that many Asians must leave Kenya, but he would be willing to allow 20 per cent of the trade to be controlled by them, providing that they became Kenya citizens. In order to prevent Asians from selling out their businesses at unfair prices, he has proposed that the Government of India lend sufficient funds to Kenya to allow Africans to enter their own economy.⁵⁶ Asians who desire to remain, and prove it by becoming citizens, are welcome to stay, but they will not be able to continue their dominance over the retail economy of the country.

On October 24, 1964, President Jomo Kenyatta issued a statement that clarified the position of his government on discrimination. "Our Government," he said, "will not discriminate against any citizens on matters of employment opportunity, recruitment and promotion. All citizens of Kenya, regardless of their race or colour or country of origin, have equal opportunities and duties in the building of our Public Service."⁵⁷ It is important to realise that Kenyatta spoke only of equal rights for citizens. Those Asians who did not apply for citizenship, who did not wish to become citizens, or who have applied and been denied citizenship, have

55. Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1963), pp. 107-110.

56. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-60.

57. Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 2-4, 8, 14-15, 18, 78.; and Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness* (Nairobi: E.A.P.H., 1968), pp. 237-8.

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lost their rights in Kenya. Although Kenyatta spoke of equality for everyone in Kenya, he visualised Africanization of the government and industry. Citizenship should not be based on race, and according to Kenyatta, it is not. He has proclaimed the need for an end to racial hatred, but persons who have been denied citizenship or for other reasons been forced to leave East Africa, feel that race is the motivation.

Conclusion

From earliest times Indians have been an important element in the economic and political development of East Africa although their role has frequently been undermined by colonial officials, settlers, and Africans. Under British colonial rule, the Indians were discriminated against and socially segregated. They were not allowed to enter European clubs, hotels, restaurants and other facilities. Unlike Africans and Europeans, Indians were not accorded trial by jury and were not given fair representation in the legislative bodies of the colonies. Asians were blamed for going to Africa to monetarily drain the continent and then return to India, yet no European criticised the European officer and worker who went to India and returned home as quickly as possible to be with his family. Asians were forbidden land in choice farming areas of East Africa, yet they were welcomed as indentured servants on European farms or as laborers in the town. Indians employed by the Civil Service received only 25 per cent of European salaries and could not advance to senior posts. Throughout the first seven decades of the twentieth century, the Asian in East Africa has been forced into a subservient role, first by the colonial administration, and then by the independent black governments who want their people to prosper from newly-found freedom. The Asian in Africa may continue to play a vital role in the development of the area, but he must be trusted and accepted, not treated as an enemy alien. Normal international rules indicate that a person is a citizen of the land in which he is born. Asians born in East Africa under colonial rule now find themselves without a country. The new regimes do not recognize them as citizens because they were born before the present state came into existence, and many Asians preferred to keep British passports instead of accepting African citizenship when offered that opportunity. Some Africans claimed

that it is their nation's prerogative to deny citizenship to anyone that it chooses. Their opinion is that of the minority, but unless the black African and Asian African are able to discuss their differences, the Asian in East Africa will only be part of history, not of the future. Those Asians who desire to remain in Africa must reconcile their way of life to conform with the new movements, and must allow African participation in their businesses, schools, and culture. Citizenship is mandatory, but the black governments must also ensure that fair and impartial treatment is given to all Asian applicants. When this is done, East Africa will truly be the land that Nyerere desires, a land of "Uhuru na Umoja"—Freedom and Unity.

Evolution of the Economic Policy of the Indian National Congress (1885-1947)*

BY

N. BENJAMIN

Throughout its life, the Indian National Congress has been the premier political party of our country which has overshadowed all other parties that preceded it or have existed with it. As such, it is worthwhile for us to try to find out the thinking of the Congress on economic affairs. This becomes all the more necessary when it is commonly heard that till the thirties of the present century when the National Planning Committee was formed, the Congress had few or no economic programmes and policies of its own. However, this popular belief is wrong. From the point of view of the resolutions passed at its annual sessions, the Congress was more prolific till 1920 than subsequent to that year. In fact, whenever an important incident in the economic life of the country happened, the Congress adopted an appropriate resolution on it. In this sense, the economic resolutions of the Congress in general, and those passed before 1920 in particular, are a reflection of the economic phenomena in our country. Secondly, it is true that the National Planning Committee kept an eye on the Indian economy as a whole. But it is wrong to identify the Planning Committee with the Congress. The members of the Congress had, of course, taken the initiative in forming the Planning Committee. But the Congress did not officially recognise its plan.

It is also commonly held that after 1920, the Congress came under the spell of Gandhiji. Politically whatever be the truth in this statement, economically, at its best, it is only partially correct. There is no doubt that under the influence of Gandhiji, from desiring reduction in the rate of the salt tax, the Congress came

* This paper is a summary of the author's unpublished doctorate thesis on the problem of "Economic programmes and policies of the Indian National Congress (1885-1947)" approved by the University of Jodhpur in 1968.

to demand its abolition and from laying more or less an equal stress on both traditional and modern industries in the pre-1920 period, the Congress shifted emphasis to traditional industries. But it never denounced the modern large-scale production by machines as Gandhiji himself did. In the other fields of economic life also, the Congress kept its individuality. The thinking of the Congress and its leaders has been summarised below under different heads:

1. *The Congress: Its Economic Programmes and Policies*

The original idea of Hume when he organized this Congress in 1885 was to make the Congress a social organisation. But Lord Dufferin, who was then the Viceroy, suggested that it should be a political body so that through it the masses could ventilate their grievances. Hume liked this suggestion. To implement it, he wrote a circular letter to the Graduates of the University of Calcutta, imploring them to leave aside personal aspirations and to work for the regeneration of their motherland. The result was the formation of the Indian National Union which decided to hold its first session in Poona. In view of the national importance of the organisation, its name was changed to the 'Indian National Congress'. As plague broke out in Poona, the venue of the meeting was shifted to Bombay. Here in 1885 the first session of the Congress was held at Goculdas Tejpal Sanskrit College.

Though primarily a political organisation, the Congress did not ignore the economic questions. Except in 1921, 1939 and 1940, in no year was an annual session of the Congress held when no resolution pertaining to the economic life of the country was passed. The interest of the Congress in economic affairs is not surprising. There were two reasons for this, viz., firstly, the Congress leaders themselves mixed politics with economics; and, secondly, they wanted to make the Congress a truly national organisation and moved resolutions pertaining to political, economic, social, educational and even religious issues.

Constitutionally also the Congress did not debar itself from touching the economic problems. Its objects successively were the 'well-being' of the masses and the attainment of 'Swarāj'. But both of them are intimately related to material betterment. There can be no 'well-being' of a person and 'Swarāj' is meaningless to him unless he becomes economically well-off.

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The Swarāj Party, the Congress Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc were parties within the Congress Party. Their economic programmes and policies were fairly similar to those of the Congress itself like the economic regeneration of our country, boycott of British goods, organisation of labour etc.

2. *The Congress and the Poverty of India*

Historically, India was always regarded a land of plenty and prosperity. It was for the Congress and its leaders to proclaim to the world the poverty of their country. To give greater authority to their pronouncements, they quoted from the statements of British Officers themselves like Sir W. W. Hunter and Sir Charles Elliott. But the Government and its officials were obviously not inclined to openly concede that India was economically either stagnant or getting worse off. On the other hand, they insisted that India was heading towards material improvement. In support of their contention they pointed out certain changing trends in the Indian economy like (i) the accumulation of precious metals; (ii) increase in both volume and value of foreign trade; (iii) increase in tax receipts; (iv) expansion in the area under cultivation; and, (v) a general rise in prices. The Congress leaders believed that these changes were not indicators of prosperity. They believed that the increase in the accumulation of precious metals, foreign trade and the area under cultivation was not commensurate with the increase in population. They felt that the increase in tax receipts was because of the heavy taxation imposed by the Government. As regards a general rise in prices, they contended that it caused hardship to the masses. Not merely this, the Congress leaders singled out the factors which they thought were responsible for the country's poverty viz., (i) decline of indigenous industries, (ii) excessive tax burden, (iii) costly system of administration—both civil and military, (iv) exclusion of Indians from the administration of their country and (v) the drain of wealth from India to other countries.

After analysing the causes of poverty, the Congress suggested a set of remedial measures. The latter consisted of (i) Indianisation of the country's legislature, (ii) raising of the exemption limit of income tax from Rs. 500 *per annum* to Rs. 1000 *per annum*.

(iii) reduction in public expenditure—both civil and military
 (iv) improvement in agricultural practices and establishment of agricultural banks, (v) the system of permanent settlement, and
 (vi) establishment of industrial units technical schools and colleges.

3. *The Congress and Famines*

Whenever severe famines occurred, the Congress adopted appropriate resolutions on them in which it sought to analyse the causes of famines, relief work undertaken to mitigate the hardships caused by them, and the necessary remedial measures to prevent their recurrence in the future. The Congress believed that an important factor causing famines was the increasing poverty of the masses which, in its turn, was caused firstly by the drain of wealth from India to England and secondly by the high level of taxation prevailing in the country. The Congress thought that as a result of their poverty, at the very first touch of scarcity, the people became helpless and looked upon the State to maintain them. The second factor causing famines, according to the Congress, was the heavy burden of land revenue which impoverished the cultivators. The third factor for famines was the export of foodgrains from India to other countries. The idea behind this argument was that the domestic supply of foodgrains in the country was reduced to a corresponding extent.

The Congress and its leaders also discussed the famine relief work undertaken to mitigate the distress brought about by famines. They were grateful to the Government of India for their beneficial policy in this field during the great famines of 1897-98 and 1899-1900. But they condemned the half-hearted way in which the Government of Bengal tried to solve the problem of food shortage in 1943.

Finally, the Congress touched the problem of famine prevention. The measures which it suggested to this end were; (i) economy in administration—both civil and military; (ii) stopping the exports of foodgrains from India to other countries; (iii) encouragement and development of industries—both traditional and modern; and, (iv) an enquiry into the economic condition of the masses.

4. *The Congress and Agricultural Problems and Policies*

Recurrences of famines are intimately related to the agricultural situation of a country. As such, the Congress made observations on it. The Congress stood for reforms in the system of land tenure. In this connection it talked of the 'permanent settlement of land revenue' which it wanted between the Government and the cultivators. An important ground for demanding 'permanent settlement' was the belief that land assessment in India was heavy and that at every periodical settlement, it was further raised. For removing these evils, in addition to the 'Permanent Settlement System', the Congress suggested two remedies viz., settlement of land revenue for at least sixty years and reduction in land assessments. When the Congress formed Governments in the provinces under the Government of India Act, 1935, it attempted to lighten the burden of land revenue and made remissions in it.

The Congress also touched the issue of intermediaries. In the beginning it was reconciled to their existence. As late as 1926, it urged "the adjustment of the relations between the land-lords and tenants". In 1936 the Congress attributed the poverty, indebtedness and unemployment in the rural areas principally to the "antiquated and repressive" systems of land tenure and revenue and opined that their solution "inevitably" involved a thorough change in them. However, in its election manifesto dated December 11, 1945, the Congress was more explicit: "The reform of the land system, which is so urgently needed in India, involves the removal of intermediaries between the peasant and the state."

Another problem with which the Congress was deeply concerned was that of agricultural financing. The Congress pleaded for the establishment of agricultural banks and welcomed the Co-operative Credit Societies Bill, 1903. In the following year the Congress as an organisation did not touch this issue. But the National Planning Committee showed keen interest in it and advocated the establishment of suitable institutions for agricultural financing.

Further, the Congress opposed the proposition of making agricultural land inalienable to check the transfer of cultivated

land from the agricultural to non-agricultural classes. The Congress held that such a course of action was likely to unduly hinder agricultural financing and that the real remedy lay in moderating the land assessments. As such, the Congress opposed the Punjab Land Alienation Bill, 1899.

Besides these, the Congress made other miscellaneous recommendations also like (i) the implementation of Dr. Voelcker's *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* (1893) (ii) establishment of experimental farms and, (iii) the adoption of all those measures both by the Government and the landlords which would put Indian agriculture on a scientific footing.

5. *The Congress and Industrial Policy*

The attitude of the Congress towards industries can be said to have passed through two broad stages till 1947. In the first stage (1885-1919) the Congress was a staunch supporter of the industrialisation of the country which, according to its thinking then, consisted of the regeneration of the traditional indigenous industries and the establishment of modern large-scale production units. In the second stage (1920-47) also the Congress stood for the development of both traditional (consisting primarily of khadi and village industries) and modern industries. But it added emphasis on the former in relation to the latter. We can account for two stages in the industrial policy of the Congress. In the first stage the Congress laid more or less an equal stress on both the classes of industries probably because it desired the utilisation of Indian capital in the establishment of industries rather than in internal commerce. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the great strides made by the western countries towards industrialisation and the decay of indigenous industries might also have motivated the Congress leaders to make their organisation favour both the types of industries. In the second stage the Congress laid emphasis on khadi and village industries probably owing to the great post-war depression and Gandhiji's influence.

Allusion should also be made here to the Swadeshi and the Boycott movements. They came into force as a result of the partition of Bengal effected in 1905. The Swadeshi movement sought to encourage indigenous industries by popularising their products and the Boycott movement aimed to achieve the same end by discouraging the utilisation of non-Indian goods. Both

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the movements were thus complementary to each other. The Congress supported them and denounced the measures by which the Government tried to suppress them. These movements secured only limited success. The reasons for this were: (i) they were not based on economic foundations (ii) the Government was hostile to them; (iii) the Muslims were indifferent; and (iv) the traders *etc.* did not co-operate.

6. *The Congress and Labour Problems*

The Congress showed great interest in the labour problems facing India. It dealt with the various classes of labourers. The foremost among them were the factory labourers. The Congress conceded their right to organize themselves into trade unions for improving their social, economic and political conditions. When the All-India Trade Union Congress was formed in 1920, the Congress leaders actively associated themselves with it. Lala Lajpat Rai, a prominent member of the Congress from the Punjab, was the first President of Trade Union Congress. But when this Congress came under the influence of the Leftists, the Congress leaders, together with some labour leaders, formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress in 1947. When the Congress Governments were formed in the provinces, they sought to improve the lot of the factory workers. They attempted to achieve this by: (i) instituting inquiries into the condition of industrial workers, (ii) making budgetary provisions for the welfare of workers like the provision of canteens, reading rooms, lantern lectures, *etc.*, (iii) helping the formation and strengthening of trade unions, *etc.*

The Congress also referred to the indentured labourers both in and outside India. It was unhappy over the penal legislation of Assam which authorized the tea planters to arrest their employees if they tried to leave tea gardens during the period of their indenture. It also felt distress at the conditions of semi-slavery in which indentured labourers of Indian origin lived in foreign countries. The Congress, therefore, advocated the abolition of the institution of indentured labourers for work both in India and elsewhere.

Thirdly, the Congress made observations on the Indian Mining Bill, 1900 which sought to regulate the working of Indian mines by the appointment of Inspectors. Unfortunately, the Congress opposed it under the pressure of mining interests.

Fourthly and lastly, the Congress referred to agricultural labourers in 1938 and conceded their right to organise themselves into unions.

7. The Congress and Commercial Policy

The Congress and its leaders favoured the policy of protection as against that of free trade which the Government of India were pursuing till the twenties of the present century. The Congress supported the 5 per cent *ad valorem* duty on cotton fabrics and yarns which was levied by the Government of India in 1894. At the same time, the Congress opposed the 5 per cent excise duty on yarns produced by the Indian mills. At the instance of the Scotch and Lancashire manufacturers, the Government of India passed the Cotton Duties Act in 1896. Under it, all cotton yarns were freed from duty; a 3½ per cent duty was imposed on cotton goods of all varieties which were imported into India and an excise duty of 3½ per cent was levied on all cotton goods manufactured by the Indian mills. The Congress was opposed to these changes and declared that the excise duty was bound to arrest the free growth of the indigenous weaving industry. There are, however, other indications also which suggest that the Congress was inclined towards a policy of protection. In 1885, for example, the Congress favoured the 'reimposition' of customs duties to finance military expenditure. In 1889 it suggested the imposition of *ad valorem* import duties instead of raising the rate of the salt tax. In 1915 the Congress went even further and suggested that 'fiscal freedom' with special reference to import, export and excise duties should be granted to the Government of India.

In these early years also, many Congress leaders were reconciled to imperial preference. But when the Indian Fiscal Commission, 1921-22, instituted inquiries, it found that the Indian masses genuinely wanted a protective policy for the development of indigenous industries. On this Commission's recommendations, when the Government of India adopted a policy of discriminating protection, the Congress leaders desired it to be used for the benefit of Indian industries. The first industry to get protection under the new policy was that of iron and steel. In the Legislative Assembly in 1924, the Congress leaders strongly supported the Government's move to impose duties on imported steel. But the effectiveness of protection thus granted was soon nullified by a fall in the prices

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of imported steel. So in 1925 the Government introduced the Steel Industry (Protection) Bill in the Legislative Assembly. In terms of it while bounties were to be given to Indian iron and steel, the duties on imported steel were to be lowered. But the fall was to be more for British steel and less for the continental steel. The Congress leaders hailed the principle of protection for our steel industry. But they denounced the inclusion of imperial preference in it. The Congress leaders also favoured the grant of protection to the indigenous match industry. But they were unhappy at the Government's indifference to counteract the threat of Swedish manufacturers to the indigenous manufacturers. Similarly in 1925, the Congress leaders welcomed the Government's move to protect the Indian paper industry. But they made their own suggestions in the matter of details. In 1939 the question of giving protection to our sugar industry was debated in the Legislative Assembly. Then again, the Congress leaders favoured the grant of protection to that industry. But they opposed the imposition of the excise duty on factory sugar in 1937.

Finally, the Congress and its leaders made observations on the Ottawa Agreement, the Mody-Less Pact and the Indo-British Trade Agreement. They contended that these agreements constituted a receding back on the part of the Government of India from their earlier position of discriminating protection. The reason for this, they thought, was that these agreements were based on the principle of imperial preference and that the preferences were more favourable to Great Britain than to India.

8. *The Congress and the Development of Railways*

From the point of view of resolutions passed at the annual sessions of Congress, the railways was a neglected subject. Only two resolutions pertaining to them were passed. One resolution was passed on the difficulties of third class passengers (in 1895) and the other touched this issue as well as these of inter-class passengers and the railway rates (in 1919). But in their personal capacities, the Congress leaders sought to fill up the vacuum. In their speeches and writings, they alluded to the different aspects of the development of railways in India.

Till the early years of the present century the Congress leaders referred to railway finance. They deplored the construction of

railways by guaranteeing interest thereon. They believed that this caused extravagance in railway construction and neglect of passenger convenience. They were also dissatisfied with the construction of railways by the State by public borrowings in England. They thought that the payment of interest thereon (as also the guarantee system) resulted in the drain of wealth from India to England.

It was also in these years that there emerged a controversy between the Government spokesmen and the Congress leaders regarding the relative importance of railways and irrigation works in India. The Government officials laid stress on the development of railways pointing towards their role in the distribution of foodgrains in times of famines. The Congress leaders, on the contrary, argued that irrigation works were much more important as they alone added to the available supply of foodgrains. So far as famine prevention is concerned, the Congress leaders appear nearer the truth than the Government officials.

The Congress leaders also talked of the difficulties faced by third class passengers and to some extent, by inter class passengers. They listed them thus: (i) over-crowding in compartments, (ii) unsatisfactory arrangements for lighting, cleanliness, lavatories, etc. in the compartments and for food and drinking water at the railway stations; (iii) harassment of passengers by the railway servants, and the like. The Congress leaders sought to get these difficulties remedied by increasing the number of lower class carriages in trains. Some of them even suggested a classless railway. The Congress leaders thought that the other difficulties of passengers could be solved by: making arrangements for proper lighting and cleanliness in compartments; making provision for food and drinking water in railway stations; instructing railway servants to behave properly with passengers, etc.

The problem of railway rates also attracted the attention of the Congress and its leaders. They held that the rates then followed by different railway administrations discriminated against Indian commerce and industry. The Government and railway officials did not concede this charge. But historically this argument of the Congress leaders is correct.

With regard to railway management also, there emerged a controversy between the Congress leaders and the Government

spokesmen. The former favoured the management of railways by the States to secure (i) abolition of discriminating rates; (ii) an addition in its resources; (iii) convenience for the travelling public; (iv) greater employment of Indians in the railway services; and, (v) reduction in the recurrences of strikes. It was also urged that the State should manage the railways simply because it owned them. The Government officials, on the other hand, advanced counter-arguments to defend the management of railways by the railway companies. They argued that railway rates were adequately controlled by the Government of India. The State takeover of railways, they said, was likely to reduce their efficiency and profitability and that the condition of passengers was not likely to improve. They also believed that the Government-management of railways would be in conflict with the decentralisation of railway administration.

9. *The Congress and Monetary Policy*

The Congress took a continuous interest in the monetary problems of our country. When the Indian Currency Committee was appointed in 1892 to enquire and report on Indian Currency, the Congress advised the Government of India to refrain from making any changes in the currency system of the country until the results of the Brussels Conference were known and to lay before the public for discussion the recommendations which the Committee might make before taking any action on them. In the following year when the mints were closed to the free coinage of silver, the Congress regretted it. The Congress believed that the closure of the mints resulted in (i) the imposition of additional indirect taxation on the masses; (ii) the scarcity of finance for industries; and, (iii) reduction in the value of silver and other possessions of cultivators thereby reducing their resistance to famines. Besides the main currency issue, the Congress and its leaders showed great indignation at the side issue of the grant of exchange compensation allowance to non-domiciled European and Eurasian Government officers and demanded its abolition.

When the Indian Currency Committee, 1898-99 was investigating into Indian currency, the Congress again passed a resolution regarding our country's currency. In it the Congress opined that the fundamental cause of the loss by exchange was the

growth of expenditure of the Government of India in England and that real remedy lay in England sharing an equitable portion of that expenditure. When the Currency Committee submitted its report in 1899, then it recommended a gold standard for India. The Congress was, however, dissatisfied with this currency plan. It saw three defects in it *viz.*, (i) it would raise gold obligations of India; (ii) it would increase the indebtedness of the poor; and, (iii) it would adversely affect indigenous manufactures.

Next, the Congress leaders took up the question of the location of the Gold Standard Reserve. As against the Government of India's policy of keeping it partly in England, the Congress leaders wanted the whole of it to be kept in India.

After maintaining silence for several years, the Congress then passed a resolution on Indian currency in 1920. In it the Congress criticized the Government for accepting the recommendations of the Indian Exchange and Currency Committee, 1920. It expressed its belief that the rise in exchange and the sale of Reverse Councils was likely to be detrimental to Indian industries. The controversy regarding currency between the Government of India and the Congress was, however, rekindled when the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, 1926 recommended that the rate of exchange for the rupee be fixed at 1s. 6d. (gold). The Congress leaders and particularly Madan Mohan Malaviya were unhappy at this recommendation as they considered the rate high and, therefore, detrimental to Indian industries and exports.

In 1931 the Government of India linked the rupee to the sterling at the above-quoted exchange rate as in that year the British Government had abandoned the Gold Standard. The Congress and its Working Committee were opposed to this linkage. In 1931 the Congress suggested that the rupee should be left free to find its own level in terms of gold. In 1938 the Working Committee suggested that the rupee was over-valued at 1s. 6d. and that the exchange rate should be fixed at 1s. 4d.

In 1939 the World War II broke out which continued till 1945. During these years and even subsequent to this till 1947, even though the Congress concentrated on political agitation, the All-India Congress Committee made observations on the vital issue of Indian currency. The Committee insisted that India's sterling balances accrued during the World War II should not be scaled down.

10. *The Congress and Public Finance*

In the sphere of public finance, the Congress referred only to some of its aspects. In the field of public revenue the Congress referred to more important of its sources. From the very beginning, the Congress made observations on the salt tax. The Congress then stood for a reduction in the rate of this tax. But subsequently under the influence of Gandhiji, the Congress pledged itself to its abolition. When Liaquat Ali Khan abolished it in 1947, the Congress leaders hailed this step. The Congress also made allusions to the income tax. It entreated the Government of India to raise the exemption limit of this tax from Rs. 500 *per annum* to Rs. 1000 *per annum*. When the Government of India conceded this request in 1903, the Congress thanked the Government for this. The Congress and its leaders also criticized the excise revenue including the opium revenue. Lastly, the Congress promised that on the attainment of Swaraj the burden of land revenue would be substantially reduced and that an of protection to that industry. But they opposed the imposition

Coming to the items of public expenditure, the Congress concentrated on the military expenditure, civil expenditure and expenditure on education. The Congress desired a substantial reduction in military expenditure. It believed that the Government of India was then required to maintain a high level of military expenditure owing to (i) an aggressive frontier policy; (ii) army amalgamation and reorganisation schemes; and (iii) excessive employment of non-Indians. Similarly, the Congress stood for an appreciable reduction in civil expenditure. It held that this could be effected by giving greater employment to Indians and by fixing the maximum salaries at Rs. 500 *per mensem* in ordinary cases. Lastly, the Congress passed resolutions regarding public expenditure on education. It suggested an increase in it. It is important to note that this was the main developmental expenditure which the Congress as a body advocated. But when the Non-Co-operation movement was launched in the twenties and subsequently the Congress did not simultaneously suggest greater expenditure on education. The reason for this was that the Non-Co-operation movement, *inter alia*, consisted of the boycotting of educational institutions run by the Government.

Having thus reviewed the thinking of the Congress and its leaders on the economic questions facing the country, let us now attempt to explain the ideas underlying this thinking. The foremost of such ideas is the theory of economic drain. The Congress held this drain partly responsible for the poverty of the country and for the recurrences of famines in it. The Congress leaders opposed the investment of British capital in Indian railways because they considered it, among other things, as a means by which the economic drain from India to England took place. Lastly, the Congress had obviously an eye on this drain when it demanded Indianisation of services—both civil and military.

The second idea underlying the thinking of the Congress and its leaders was their opposition to the colonial exploitation of India. It was because of this that the Congress and its members opposed the existence of intermediaries between the cultivators and the Government and suppression of the Swadeshi and the Boycott movements by the Government. The hostility of the Congress and its leaders towards indentured labourers both in and outside India and the Government's acts of giving imperial preference to 'empire' goods when it had officially adopted a policy of discriminating protection, also point in this direction. They also denounced the discriminating railway rates, neglect of third and inter-class passengers, company management of railways, grant of exchange compensation allowance, over-valuation of the rupee and excessive civil and military expenditure in the same spirit.

Lastly, an important foundation of the economic programmes and policies of the Congress was its desire to regenerate India's economy. To this end the Congress listed measures to reduce poverty in the country and to reduce the frequency of famines in it. The industrial and agricultural policies of the Congress were also aimed at this. The observations of the Congress and its leaders with regard to the organisation of agricultural labourers, protection from foreign industries, improvements in the travelling condition of third and inter-class passengers, adoption of a suitable monetary policy and an increase in the volume of public expenditure on education were motivated by their anxiety to develop India economically.

We thus see that the Congress, although primarily a political party, kept a keen eye on the economic problems facing the country.

American Reaction to Gandhi's Arrest in 1942 —The Conflict of Ideology and Necessity

BY

YUVARAJ DEVA PRASAD

"When I think of Gandhi I think of Christ"—thus spoke Dr. John Haynes Holmes¹ in early twenties when Gandhi had just begun his task of bringing freedom to India.² Ever since that time Americans have taken the most lively interest in him. Many became his champions and thus the champions of the cause of freedom for India. They believed situations were ripe for George V to lose the Dependency of India as George III had lost America.³

In its response to Mohandas K. Gandhi's arrest in 1942. America found itself confronted with a difficult ideological question at a most critical time. This paper concerns itself with the relationship of war exigencies to moral issues.

When World War II broke out, and particularly after Pearl Harbor when America found herself in the vortex of the war, Indo-American relations entered a complex phase. Winning the war was the first and foremost American concern because an Axis victory would deny forever all hopes of freedom throughout the world.⁴ But to Gandhi the Allied declaration that they were fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounded hollow as long as Indians, and for that

1. Dr. John Haynes Holmes was a long-time pastor of the Community Church in New York and one the keenest American students of Gandhi's life for over thirty years.

2. Pasupuleti Gopal Krishnayya, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi and the U.S.A.* (New York: An Orient and World Publication, 1949), p. 1.

3. Haridas T. Mazumdar, *Gandhi Versus the Empire*. (New York: Universal Publishing Company, 1932), p. IX.

4. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. I, p. 703. Franklin D Roosevelt to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, August 1, 1942.

matter, others also, remained under foreign rule.⁵ Gandhi had also urged the United States to intercede for Indian independence in a "letter to American friends" which he had handed to U.S. correspondents in the Indian National Congress party session at Bombay on August 7, 1942. "You have made common cause with Great Britain," he had said, "you cannot therefore disown responsibility for anything that her representatives do in India."⁶

But, while India expected the United States to help her obtain freedom first, the United States wished India to cooperate in the war efforts. Gandhi also considered nazism and fascism as great a horror as the Americans did. But while Americans would match violence with violence, Gandhi would oppose violence through non-violence. It was contended "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for tooth." But Gandhi told his people, "if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other; and if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him"⁷ America believed that he who takes up arms in a just war fulfils, purely and simply, his duty as a man.⁸ Gandhi considered those people who struggle without using violence as unconquerable. Nevertheless, the spirit, the hopes which led Gandhi to his decision were adverse to American cause, yet those hopes and that spirit represented what was at stake in that battle and the purest and highest of aims for which they were fighting.⁹

On August 8, 1942, came the fateful decision of the Indian National Congress asking the British to "Quit India" Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, who had described Gandhi as "the greatest thing in India" in a conversation with Louis Fischer only a few days before, now ordered his immediate arrest and the arrest of all other important leaders of the Indian National

5. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, Vol. I, p. 678. M. K. Gandhi to Roosevelt, July 1, 1942.

6. "Frogs in a Well," *Time*, August 17, 1942 p. 26. See "Gandhi to America," *Time*, November 16, 1942, p. 42.

7. M. A. Couturier, "Gandhi and Ourselves," *The Commonwealth*, June 19, 1942, p. 202.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

9. *Ibid.*

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Congress party. By the early hours of the next day, i.e., August 9, 1942, Gandhi and other Indian leaders were taken into custody.

The Indian people had been expecting the United States to come out and take a stand on their side and put pressure on the British government to free them. But the U.S. government considered it wiser to refrain from taking action for the time being.¹⁰ She only regretted the stalemate between the British government and the Indian leaders, but did not try to resolve the issue.

It was a momentous question and the U.S. government was greatly concerned. It deplored the development in India but stuck to the earlier decision that America could exert her influence more effectively in this matter by refraining from offering active mediation to either side. Brushing aside the morality of the case, the U.S. considered any action that slowed the war effort in India not merely as theoretical assistance, but as actual assistance to the armed forces of Japan. It wished Gandhi to see more clearly the need for India's immediate help and understanding that an Axis victory would be the worst thing to happen for the people of India.¹¹ Thus the government made no open nor public appeal, nor any pronouncement on the Indian situation. Only the Department of State issued a press release on August 12, 1942, which stated the government's policy to the American military forces in India. American military forces in India were ordered to "exercise scrupulous care to avoid the slightest participation in India's internal political problems." The instructions, making clear the United States' hands-off policy, explained that "the sole purpose of the American forces in India was to prosecute the war of the United Nations against the Axis powers."¹²

President Roosevelt's primary aim in Asia was to aid China, but American troops would aid in defending India in the event she should be attacked. According to the orders, however, they

10. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, Vol. 1, p. 715. Roosevelt to Chiang Kai-Shek, undated. (By the direction of the President, the Assistant Secretary of State, Sumner Wells, handed this message to Dr. T. V. Soong in Washington on the afternoon of August 8, 1942).

11. *Ibid.*

12. *The New York Times*, August 13, 1942, p. 8:4

were not to take any part in internal disturbances unless it became necessary to defend themselves, American citizens, or American military supplies and equipment.¹³

Though the government remained virtually silent about Gandhi's arrest, the attention of the people and press of the United States were greatly attracted by the happenings in India. There was considerable concern since the troubles in India endangered American troops stationed there and intensified the difficulties of getting supplies to China. Americans were themselves doubtful if any official action would be taken by their government.

In spite of Gandhi's proclamation that "I want India to oppose Japan to a man," charges were made that Gandhi refused to resist the Japanese.¹⁴ It was alleged that he was ready to risk a civil war as well as the danger of invasion in a reckless gamble to cash at once the "post-dated check" he spurned when it was offered by the Cripps mission.¹⁵ He was even suspected to be pro-Japanese because the Indian developments fitted handsomely into Japanese over-all strategy. "Even if the northern forces, taking advantage of Russia's distress in the Caucasus, were to launch a blitzkrieg in Siberia, task forces were still available to wage a simultaneous campaign against India by land, sea, and air. Control of India would isolate China and facilitate attacks on American supplies being sent to Russia by way of the Persian Gulf and Iran." Such was *Newsweek's* comment in the issue of August 17, 1942, to which was added the observation that "It was understandable that the Tokyo broadcast took on an ecstatic note. The Japanese were the chief beneficiaries of Gandhi's manoeuvre."¹⁶ The magazine also printed a picture of Gandhi upside down, with his feet in the clouds of confusion, chaos and contradiction. Gandhi was ridiculed and made an

13. *Ibid.*

14. Krishnalal Shridharani, *The Mahatma and the World*. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), p. 184.

15. Anne O' Hare McCormick, "The Tragic Test of Congress Leadership in India," *The New York Times*, August 15, 1942, p. 18:5.

16. "Gandhi Risks India in a Gamble while Japanese Stand at the Gates," *Newsweek*, August 17, 1942, p. 45.

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object of attack by the American newspaper cartoonists to whom he was just a funny little crackpot, bald as a beanpole, who didn't know enough to come in out of the rain. They treated Gandhi as if he didn't know that the Japanese were at India's door. In the cartoons Gandhi was either a fool or a traitor.¹⁷ The *New York Herald Tribune* came out with a cartoon depicting "The Strong Man of India" as an ugly dwarf pulling down "a hundred years of building for India." *Newark Evening News* printed a cartoon captioned "Slight Fallacy in the Gandhi Plan" in which Gandhi was sarcastically painted as not only having severed all ties with the British but also severed his head from body with the same weapon for "special delivery to Japan." The *Kansas City Star* portrayed Gandhi as having entered a Japanese demon's bedroom with the offer of "any cooperation with the Japs." The *Detroit News* showed Gandhi being welcomed by armed Axis leaders. The *Pittsburgh Press* painted Gandhi as being charmed by the false freedom propaganda of the Nazi being done by poisonous snakes.

The extremely biased outlook of the American cartoonists and newspapers in regard to India's fight for freedom emerged partly because the cartoonists tried to make India's complex problems just as simple as "American apple pie" and partly because, like most Americans, the cartoonists mistook the Indians for a low, uncivilized people who did not know what was good for them. In all the cartoons there was nothing to suggest that the U.S. itself might have some moral responsibility for India's present state and might have some clear duty to try sympathetically to repair the serious breach in the democratic front. Even though India's attitude hindered the Allied war effort, Americans should have remembered that it was foreign imperialism that Indians were fighting against.¹⁸ Before he was jailed, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said: "It is curious that people who talk in terms of their own freedom (the Americans) should level the charge of blackmail against those who are fighting for their freedom."¹⁹

17. "American Cartoonists Attack India's Greatest Man," *Life*, August 24, 1942, p. 32.

18. *Life*, September 14, 1942 (Gandhi Cartoons Letters to editors), p. 2.

19. "Frogs in a Well," *Time*, August 17, 1942, p. 27.

It was only a year before that F. D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill had asked the world's approval for their Atlantic Charter. It was a pledge of sorts, even if Churchill subsequently announced that it did not apply to India, Burma and the British Colonies. The American government, despite a generally pro-British and occasionally miserably misinformed interpretation of the Indian question in press and radio, were aware that in India the Atlantic Charter, and all that went with it, had come up against the first big test.

Such charges were widely believed in America, not because of any malice, but because of an inadequate understanding of the Gandhian way of fighting.²⁰ The Allied concept of war against fascism was geographic, while the Indian concept was ideological. The Allied strategy against fascists was horizontal, based upon national boundaries. The Gandhian strategy against fascists vertical; the latter idea was to fight against fascism wherever it was found in the minds of men. Gandhi had advised his people, "Of course the people must not, on any account, lean on the Japanese to get rid of the British power. That were a remedy worse than the disease."²¹ Also on record was Gandhi's passionate manifesto to the Japanese only the week before his arrest: "Our offer to let the Allies retain troops in India is to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into this country. If you cherish any such idea, we will not fail to resist you with all the might we can muster."²² The final draft of the "Quit India" resolution was also pro-Allies. But as writing to the India League of America, Gandhi had observed, "... interested propaganda has filled your ears and eyes with distorted visions of the Congress position. I have been painted as a hypocrite and enemy of Britain under disguise. My demonstrable spirit of accommodation has been described as my inconsistency, proving me to be an utterly unreliable man."²³

It would, however, be wrong to assume that Gandhi was friendless in America or that every American disbelieved him.

20. Krishnalal Shridharani, *The Mahatma and the World*, pp. 184-185.

21. *Ibid.* p. 185.

22. "Frogs in a Well," *Time*, August 17, 1942, p. 27.

23. Gandhi to America, *Time*, November 16, 1942, p. 42.

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President Roosevelt and the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, both supported Indian independence strongly and consistently. They were saying privately everything that the most enthusiastic supporter of India's freedom could have expected. They were also convinced that people were with them.²⁴ But they could not tell this to their country for the sake of good relations with Britain.²⁵ Roosevelt had attempted to discuss the Indian situation with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in December 1941, "along the usual American lines," but Churchill had reacted so strongly and at such length that Roosevelt had never again raised the matter verbally. Churchill's susceptibility in the Indian question was so strong that three months later he made a thinly veiled threat to resign if Roosevelt pressed officially to continue the Cripps mission efforts to conciliate the Indian Nationalists.²⁶ Thus, though Roosevelt was "trying to keep in very close touch with the situation" and was getting "the latest news from several sources every day,"²⁷ he was reluctant to imperil Allied cohesion by public criticism of Great Britain.

It was only the practicableness of Gandhi's attitude that haunted most Americans' minds. Gandhi wanted the Americans to look upon the immediate recognition of India's independence as a war measure of first-class magnitude as only then there could be irresistible opposition to Japanese aggression.²⁸ But the American view was whether the Mahatma was not bringing on a civil war just at the moment when all ranks should be closed to face the common enemy whose victory would spell common doom. If India became a battlefield it would be a serious matter for American as she had her armed forces in India. The famous author, Pearl S. Buck, urged mediation on India. She wanted the U.S., China and Russia to intervene in the dispute. In a

24. Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), Vol. II, p. 1483.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), pp. 209, 220-221.

27. Roosevelt to Fischer, August 11, 1942. Cited in Mary Walton Livingston, "Yours Sincerely, Mohandas K. Gandhi," *Prologue* (Fall 1969), p. 6.

28. "Gandhi to America," *Time*, November 10, 1942, p. 42.



statement issued on August 10, 1942, on the arrest of Gandhi and rioting in India, Buck said, ".... Those who know the truth about India are certain that force affords no safeguard for India and no solution for the allied United Nations. If we are to continue to deliver supplies to China, which is our best base against Japan, and if we are to avoid the loss of thousands of American lives through needless prolongation of the war, our government should propose at once that the U.N. mediate."²⁹

However, the U.S. government found itself in a predicament. On the one hand it was believed that failure to take action in the crisis would have unfavorable repercussion on the war effort in the Far East, while on the other, any attempt by the United States government to bring pressure to bear on the British was considered likely to give rise to controversy which could endanger Allied unity.³⁰ Again, India was an acid test of the sincerity of America's purpose in fighting that costly war.³¹ No doubt the absence of a clear-cut policy statement on the Indian independence issue was awkward for the U.S. government, but silence was preferred while the war was still going on and continued British-American cooperation essential. As usual, necessity had to prevail over ideology.

29. *The New York Times*, August 11, 1942, p. 6:16.

30. A. Guy Hope, *America and Swaraj* (Washington, D. C., Public Affairs Press, 1968), p. 36.

31. Louis Fischer, "What Gandhi Wants," *The Nation*, August 15, 1942, p. 122.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu-Muslim Question

BY

K. RAMAN PILLAI

The historical difference between Hindus and Muslims in India existed for some centuries prior to the arrival of the Britishers. It arose from a basic difference of tradition. The communal division between the Hindus and Muslims was a problem left over unsolved by history and was rapidly exploited by the British rulers.

When the British first became territorial sovereigns in India, though the Mughal Empire was in decay, here were Muslim monarchies and satrapies all over the country. In their folk-memory the Muslims of India had been rulers, not subjects. "For Muslims to roll back history by removing the European invader could not mean a restoration of Hindu rule but rather a revival of their own."¹

Under the British rule, "the Muslims fell swiftly from proud overlordship to a muttering minority. Both Hindus and Muslims faced the consequences of conquest by an alien power, but rather than join together in opposition, they contended with each other for influence."²

The politico-economic conflict between the two communities widened quickly at the start of the twentieth century. The partition of Bengal in 1905 by Curzon 'for administrative reasons' set the ball rolling. This was followed by the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906 and Minto-Morley Reforms in 1909 which provided for separate electorate for Muslims. The purpose of the separate electorate was to solve communal rivalry but the result was to exacerbate it.

1. H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain - India - Pakistan* (London, 1969), p. 11.

2. Russel Brines, *The Indo-Pakistan Conflict* (London, 1968), p.22.

The concept of communal representation meant the recognition of the political separateness of Hindus and Muslims, a precedent of immense consequence. The principle of separate electorates was accepted by the Congress in the Lucknow Pact (1916) in the interest of nationalist unity. Then came the Khilafat and Gandhi made it a national issue in the hope of winning over the Muslims to the nationalist cause. The unity forged at the time of the Khilafat was temporary. The Moplah riots of 1921 showed that an appeal in the name of Islam, even if directed against the British, could release anti-Hindu feelings and nullify the efforts of well-meaning leaders to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. The abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 by Turkey cut the ground under their feet. After a short spell of unity Hindu-Muslim relations deteriorated once again.

The refusal of the Khilafat leaders to condemn the atrocities committed against the Hindus, paved the way for the consolidation of the Hindus under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Swami Shraddhanand Saraswathi. The formation of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh in 1927 was the logical culmination of this reaction.

At the same time Khilafat agitation politicized the Muslim masses under the leadership of the Ulema and reduced the Muslim League to impotence in Indian politics. The gap between the Hindus and Muslims increased considerably. The two communities grew apart and the break became total in 1928 at the time of the Nehru Report. The Report created suspicion in the minds of the Muslims, because it proposed a strong federal government and the elimination of separate electoral rolls and other mechanisms on which the Muslims depended to maintain a political foothold. This, observed V. P. Menon was "the Congress principle of secularism but admirable though it might be in theory, it drove the Muslims away from the Congress."³

Against this background, let us examine Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu-Muslim question. Nehru's attitude was moulded by a variety of factors such as the influences of his

3. V. P. Menon, *An Outline of Indian Constitutional History* (Bombay, 1965), p. 34.

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early life and education, contacts with leaders of various countries, international developments, and his socialist and secular outlook.

From the pre-school age until he left for England at the age of fifteen he was trained at home by private tutors mostly British. This must have had a tremendous influence in shaping his attitude to Muslims and the communal problem in general. Six years at Harrow, Cambridge and London deepened his attachment to the British way of life, with the result that he turned to his native land as 'more an Englishman than an Indian'.

At the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress (1920) Nehru was an observer. When Gandhi gave a new turn to Congress politics and sought to involve the people in the struggle for freedom, Nehru felt the atmosphere electrified. This was his 'moment of inspiration' and he plunged into the movement never to look back. One has to understand this basic trait of his character to realise his aversion to communal politics. Indeed he was so absorbed that he ignored certain unattractive features, such as the strange admixture of politics and religion, the artificial unity with the Muslims, and the lack of a clear-cut ideology.

The Hindu-Muslim alliance forged at the time of the Khilafat was short-lived. The barbarities practised by the Moplahs in 1921 had immediate reaction on Hindu-Muslim relations throughout India. The first of a series of Hindu-Muslim riots occurred at Multan (Punjab) in September 1922 and was followed by riots in Saharanpur (U.P.) in 1923, Kohat (1924) and Calcutta (1926). These riots took a heavy toll of human life.

Nehru was very much disturbed at the sharp deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations. As he surveyed the tension of the mid-twenties, his hostility to orthodox religion crystallized. "The communal frenzy is awful to contemplate," he wrote to a friend. "We seem to have been caught in a whirlpool of mutual hatred and we go round and round and down and down the abyss."⁴ About religion itself he was even more critical: "No

4. Nehru-Mahmud Correspondence, 24 May 1926. *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Except otherwise mentioned, all the correspondence referred to, are from Jawaharlal Nehru Papers.

country or people who are slaves to dogma.... can progress, and unhappily our country and people have become extraordinarily dogmatic and little-minded.... I have no patience left with the legitimate and illegitimate offspring of religion."⁵

Nehru's travels abroad and his contact with eminent personalities did influence his views on the Hindu-Muslim question. In February 1927, he attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels. His attraction to communism was perhaps the most striking feature of his role at Brussels. In his speech at the plenary session of the Congress he accused British imperialism of encouraging India's communal divisions. He said, "It is frequently stated and made much of in the English press, that the Indians are fighting against each other, the Hindu against the Muslim etc.... apart from the fact that these troubles are greatly exaggerated it is the policy of the British to create these troubles or where they already exist to increase them and take every step to keep them going..... This has been the policy of the British."⁶ Nehru's initial exposure to communist views at Brussels was widened by a brief visit to Moscow early in 1927. Through reading and discussion he had acquired a wider perspective, especially the conviction that political freedom had to be linked to socialism.

Encouraged by his victory at the Madras Session (1927) of the Indian National Congress where he moved the resolution on 'complete national independence' Nehru pressed forward with his 'mission' of educating colleagues and the rank and file. Everywhere he spoke on nationalist independence and socialism. As for communalism it was a 'giant with feet of clay' which would soon disappear. At the Lahore Congress (1929) Nehru confessed that he was a 'Socialist and a Republican'. 'Real communal differences have already gone' he argued naively.

Being a socialist and republican, brought up in a secular atmosphere, Nehru's outlook was neither 'saintly' like that of his master Gandhi nor 'communal' like that of the leaders of the

5. *Ibid*; 12 June 1926 and 12 January 1927.

6. Nehru's Speech at the Brussels Congress, *AICC Papers*, File G. 29, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

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Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. He condemned both the League and the Mahasabha with equal vehemence. According to him, common national outlook implied, subordination of group interests to the interests of the larger national struggle. The development of such a national outlook, he thought could take place in the lower strata of society because those above are too much interested in British domination and hope to preserve their special privileges and vested interests through it. Communalism, Nehru held, was another name for political and social reaction and the British Government being the citadel of this reaction in India threw its sheltering wings over the useful ally (Muslim League). Therefore it must be 'fought on all fronts and given no quarter'.

Nehru looked upon the present era as the era of economics, and rightly so. He did not attach much importance to the Hindu-Muslim question. He held the view that once the economic problem was solved, other problems, political, social and communal would subside. His views were made explicit in a number of articles to the press and letters to his friends, which he wrote in the thirties.

In an article written in 1930, Nehru observed that the "true solution of our difficulties can come only when we have won over and given satisfaction to our minorities.... some of them fear the majority and for fear of it keep apart from the struggle for freedom." Obviously he was referring to the Muslims. Proceeding further he added:

The new Russia has gone a long way in solving its minorities problem by giving each one of them the fullest, cultural, educational and linguistic freedom. Therefore, we in India must make it clear to all that our policy is based on granting this freedom to the minorities and that under no circumstances will any coercion or repression of them be tolerated.... with religious and cultural and linguistic freedom granted, the principal question that will arise in our legislature will be economic ones and divisions on them cannot be on communal lines.... The Congress has endeavoured to give effect to the principles that should govern the treatment of minorities.... in communal matters it (Congress) will not deviate to the right or the left, will hold the centre impartially. It will, I hope, prove to the minority communities that in inde-

pendent India for which we strive, there will be an honoured and favoured place.⁷

The struggle against British imperialism was of utmost importance to Nehru, the nationalist. Everything else must be subordinate to this main objective. "I think the communal problem does stand by itself but is part of the larger social problem of India and the world," he wrote to Sheikh Mohammad Alam. "Looked at from the national point of view I think that the most important thing for us is to carry on our civil disobedience struggle. Only through that can we divert attention from the wretched communal wrangle of to-day,"⁸ he added.

Nehru denounced Hindu communalism in forcible language. Addressing a meeting of the Benaras Hindu University students in the winter of 1933, Nehru remarked that "under the cover of seeming nationalism the Mahasabha not only hides the rankest and narrowest communalism but also the desire to preserve the vested interests of the group of big Hindu landlords and princes." He characterised the policy of the Hindu Mahasabha as the most "degrading, reactionary, anti-national, anti-progressive and harmful."⁹

After the Benaras speech which created an uproar, Nehru wrote a reasoned article on Hindu and Muslim communalism, showing how in neither case was it even bonafide communalism, but was political and social reaction hiding behind the communal mask. Though wide publicity was given to this article there was no serious response from either Hindus or Muslims. This might have led him to believe that his views were reasonable and acceptable to the people.

Nehru's objective in writing these articles was, as he himself admits in his autobiography, to point out that "the communal leaders were allied to the most reactionary elements in India and England and were in reality opposed to political and even more so to social advance." The demands of the communal leaders according to him "had no relation whatever to the masses. They

7. Jawaharlal Nehru, "The problem of Minorities (article) 14 March 1930.

8. Jawaharlal Nehru to Sheikh Mohammad Alam, 29 October 1933.

9. *The Tribune*, 16 November 1933.

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were meant only to bring some advancement to the small groups at the top. The oft-repeated appeal for Hindu-Muslim unity, useful as it no doubt is, seemed to me singularly insane, unless some effort was made to understand the causes of disunity."¹⁰

Myth not Reality

Nehru has elaborated his views on communalism in another article entitled 'Reality and Myth' written on 4 January 1934. It must be remembered that this article was written after the period of the Round Table Conference, the Communal Award, Gandhi's epic fast in protest against the Communal Award and the controversies following Nehru's speech at Benaras Hindu University. Two letters which Nehru received towards the end of 1933 are revealing in this context. In a letter to Nehru, Asaf Ali observed:

Unity I saw this after full and mature consideration and experience of the last unity conference on an economic basis alone will be possible. which neither pacts nor appeals can bring about The Muslims, as I know them, will not give up an inch of what the Communal Award has secured them and others will not concede to them an inch beyond it The socialist ideology has great potentialities and if properly set out must catch the peoples' imagination.¹¹

C. F. Andrews, a friend of India, wrote to Nehru:

If we want to take the line of least resistance and avoid brute force would it not be for the best and most effective method to concentrate in India the National movement on certain definite economic objectives and seek to find a united front on these? If it could be proved to the vested interests themselves that economic dependence is as deadly for them as it is for the workers and peasants, then it might be possible to set up two or three immediate aims and carry them through.¹²

These friendly suggestions might also have influenced Nehru's views around this time as could be seen from the article mentioned above.

Nehru maintains in this article that the political and communal problems in India should be solved by means of a

10. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 460.

11. M. Asaf Ali to Jawaharlal Nehru, 30 September 1933.

12. C. F. Andrews to Jawaharlal Nehru, 13 November 1933.

Constituent Assembly. He is not opposed to the idea of giving Muslims separate electorates for the Constituent Assembly, provided it helps to dispel their doubts. Communalism is essentially a hunt for favours from a third party—the ruling power. The real remedy, according to him, lies in a diversion of interests from the myths that have been fostered and have grown up round the communal question to the realities of the day. Communal organisations function politically and their demands are political. In Nehru's views, the communal leaders are 'experts only in percentages' and 'their battleground is the conference room', not the field or factory. The Communal Problem will cease to exist when it is put to the hard test of real mass opinion.

Emphasising the predominance of economic issues he remarks, "we live in an age when economics dominate national and international issues. What have the communal organisation to say in regard to these economic matters?..... The Muslim masses are probably even poorer than the Hindu masses but the 'Fourteen Points' say nothing about these poverty stricken masses. The Hindu Communalists also.... ignore their own masses." After this scathing criticism of Hindu and Muslim Communalists, Nehru comes to the core of the problem: "so long as the fullest economic freedom does not come to us there can be no freedom whatever the political structure may be. Economic freedom must of course include political freedom. That is the reality of today; all else is myth and delusion, and *there is no greater myth than the communal myth.*"¹³ Nehru's remedy to the evils of communalism was rooted in the belief that once the common man had a hand in the formulation of policy, communalism would wither away. Nehru reiterated these views in his subsequent writings. In 1936, he wrote from Lausanne, "If the masses are fully represented inevitably economic issues affecting them will come to the forefront and superficial problem like the communal one will lose importance."¹⁴

13. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Reality and Myth' (article) 4 January 1934. emphasis added.

14. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'A Constituent Assembly for India' (article). 25 February 1936.

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Obviously there was consistency in his views during this period, when he branded communalism as a 'myth'. Economic issues alone were considered real and relevant in the Indian context. This was strictly in conformity with his socialistic and republican outlook and admiration for the achievements of the Soviet Union.

Even after the 1937 elections Nehru thought that communalism was a myth and that the Hindu and Muslim masses had nothing much to do with it. Writing to Sir Stafford Cripps he observed:

Even the Muslim masses are getting out of the rut of communalism and are thinking along economic lines On the whole I think that the communal position is definitely brighter. The Hindu Communalists have been largely swept away by the Congress and they count for little The Congress is supreme today so far as the masses and the lower middle classes are concerned. Even the Muslim masses look up to it for relief.¹⁵

No doubt this was an optimistic picture coloured by the intoxicating victory which the Congress won at the polls in early 1937.

Flushed with success in the 1937 elections the Congress adopted an 'imperious attitude' to all other political parties. Nehru set the tone with his remark, "There are only two forces in India today, British imperialism and Indian nationalism as represented by the Congress." Jinnah was quick to retort: 'No, there is a third party, the Mussalmans'.¹⁶

Muslim mass contact movement

The sharp deterioration in the relations between the Congress and Muslim League following the 1937 elections brought home to the Congress leaders particularly Jawaharlal Nehru the need for a reappraisal of the Congress policy towards the masses. The pacts and the alliances entered into by the Congress were only

15. Jawaharlal Nehru to Sir Stafford Cripps, 22 February 1937.

16. Quoted in Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959), p. 46.

with the leaders of the Muslim League and the masses were neglected always. This had resulted in the masses being misled by communal leaders. This feeling found expression in a resolution on mass contacts at the Lucknow Congress. The Muslim mass contact move was an inevitable extension of the policy enunciated in the resolution.

At Lucknow Nehru urged Congress to go ahead and welcome Muslim masses and intelligentsia into the Congress organisation and rid the country of communalism in every shape and form. In accordance with the resolution on mass contacts a Muslim Contacts Department was established under the AICC with Dr. K. M. Ashraf as Secretary in early 1937. Through the Muslim mass contact sub-committees at various places an attempt was made to educate the Muslim masses to a correct appreciation of their real interests and to carry on an unremitting struggle against all reactionary elements. Thousands of Muslims were enrolled as primary members of the Congress under this scheme. The programme envisaged with the day to day economic struggle of the Muslim masses and enlisting them in the Kisan and Mazdoor Sabhas and the students organisations.

The leaders of the Muslim League were perturbed by these developments. They professed to discover a conspiracy behind the Congress move and an attempt to divide the Muslims and detach them from their 'accredited leaders'. They made all efforts to dissuade their co-religionists from joining the Congress ranks. Jinnah characterised the mass contact movement as "massacre contact".¹⁷ "The Muslim mass contact movement launched by the Indian National Congress was nothing but a deadly poison to the Muslims whose duty it was to thwart it by all means" observed Mohammed Asique, President of the Gaya District Muslim League at its annual meeting.¹⁸

"Aggressiveness of the Congress Moslem mass contact movement has resulted in more active moslem bitterness towards the

17. See K. M. Ashraf, 'Problem of Muslim Mass Contact' in *Tribune* 2 April 1938.

18. *Tribune*, 26 April 1938.

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Congress than any gain we might have secured by the accession of numerical strength" wrote Sardul Caveeshar to Gandhi.¹⁹

Jinnah and other leaders of the Muslim League advised the Congress leaders to negotiate for a communal settlement with 'people who count' instead of making a direct approach to the Muslim masses and expressed their willingness to negotiate with the Congress.

Meanwhile perturbed by the results of the election and the Congress arrogation of total power, Jinnah embarked on a country-wide tour with the cry 'Islam in danger'. Muslims began to respond to his call, favourably. The 'opening shots had been fired' in the calamitous Congress-League war which later engulfed vast portions of the country in communal frenzy and led to partition.

Nehru-Jinnah correspondence

In an effort to reduce the growing friction between the Congress and the Muslim League Nehru came forward to meet the League half-way. This was evident from an exchange of letters with Jinnah during 1938 and 1939.

The exchanges between Nehru and Jinnah laid bare their basic differences in approach to the Indian problem. Nehru thought and acted in terms of Indian Unity. Jinnah was concerned only with the position of Indian Muslims. Nehru claimed that the Congress was a national organisation representing all the communities in India and that it was not communal organisation like the Muslim League—which according to him was an organisation representing a large body of Muslim opinion. At the same time Jinnah contended that the Muslim League was the authoritative and representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India. The Congress, in Jinnah's views, was trying to establish a Hindu Raj. Thus both of them approached the question from differing view points. Both adhered to their position firmly till the end.

19. Sardul Sing Caveeshar to M. K. Gandhi, 21 April 1938.

However they met more than once in an attempt to solve the Hindu-Muslim question. But these meetings proved abortive. Nehru's despondency is revealed in a letter which he wrote to Jinnah in October 1938. Nehru wrote:

I entirely agree with you that it is a tragedy that the Hindu-Muslim problem has not so far been settled in a friendly way. I feel terribly distressed about it and ashamed of myself, in so far as I have not been able to contribute anything substantial towards its solution. I must confess to you that in this matter I have lost confidence in myself, though I am not usually given that way.... At the present moment, as you will no doubt appreciate my mind is full of the rapid developments that are taking place.²⁰

Obviously Nehru was referring to the international situation which always claimed his attention. This was characteristic of Nehru's outlook.

Meanwhile Jinnah fixed up December 22nd as a 'day of deliverance and thanksgiving' as a mark of relief from the 'tyranny' of the Congress Governments. In protest against Britain's declaration of War and dragging India into it, it was decided that the Congress Ministries should resign on 22nd December. Nehru wrote to Jinnah:

What has oppressed me terribly since yesterday is the realisation that our sense of values and objectives in life as well as in politics differs so very greatly. I had hoped after our conversations, that this was not so great, but now the gulf appears to be wider than ever. Under the circumstances, I wonder what purpose will be served by our discussing with each other the problems that confronts us. There must be some common ground for discussion, some common objective aimed at, for that discussion to yield fruit.²¹

Indeed there was no common ground for discussion and no common objective to be aimed at. Hence the negotiations broke down. Jinnah wrote back to Nehru:

So long as the Congress is not prepared to treat the Muslim League as the *authoritative* and representative organisation of the Musalmans of India it was not possible to carry on talks regarding the Hindu-Muslim settlement as that was

20. Jawaharlal Nehru to Jinnah, 18 October 1938.

21. Jawaharlal Nehru to Jinnah, 9 December 1939.

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the basis laid down by the working committee of All-India Muslim League in reply to your letter of 1st December expressing your wish to see me in Bombay, I inform you that I shall be in Bombay till the 3rd week of December and I shall be glad to see you and I can only say that if you desire to discuss the matter further I am at your disposal.~

Jinnah's disinclination to discuss the question further and his determination to confront the Congress is explicit from the above letter. In his reply to Jinnah, Nehru drew the former's attention to the Congress stand regarding the representative character of the Muslim League. The Congress had considered the Muslim League as a very important and influential organisation of the Muslims. Beside the League there were other Muslim organisations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the All India Shia Conference, the Majlis-e-Ahrer, the All India Momin Conference. There were also a large number of Muslims in the Congress. The Congress could not dissociate itself from them or disown them in any way. While the Congress by its constitution had its membership open to all who subscribed to its objective and methods, the Muslim League was only open to Muslims. The Congress thus had a national basis and it could not give that up without putting an end to its existence. After highlighting the broad basis and national importance of the Congress and the narrow religious basis of the Muslim League Nehru drew his attention to the Congress stand:

... I am afraid therefore that if your desire is that we should consider the League as the sole organisation representing the Muslims to the exclusion of all others, *we are wholly unable to accede to it* It seems that politically we have no common ground and that our objectives are different. That in itself makes discussions difficult and fruitless I feel therefore that it will serve little purpose for us to meet at this stage and under these conditions with this background.²²

Nehru had at last come to the realisation that the Congress and the Muslim League differ fundamentally in so far as political objectives were concerned and that any discussion would be useless unless both discarded their very basic principles to which both

22. Jinnah to Jawaharlal Nehru, 13 December 1939. Emphasis added.

23. Jawaharlal to Jinnah, 14 December 1939.

of them had held steadfast for over many years. Communalism had become a hard reality to Nehru. This transformation could be attributed to Nehru's personal experience for a few years when he sincerely tried to settle the differences through negotiations particularly with Jinnah who by then became the undisputed leader of Muslims. This marks another stage in the development of Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu-Muslim question. Nehru's letter to Jinnah on 16 December 1939 reflects his disillusionment:

May I say again that no one on our behalf so far as I know, challenges or minimises the authority, influence and importance of the Muslim League I am compelled to think that the real difficulty is the difference in political outlook and objectives I do wish to assure you that for my part I do not want to leave any stone unturned which can lead to mutual understanding and settlement. But you *will not have me, as I do not want to have you, leave integrity of mind and purpose in pursuit of anything. Nothing worthwhile can be gained that way. I have deep political convictions, and I have laboured in accordance with them these many years. I cannot leave them at any time, much less now when the world is in the throes of a terrible crisis.*²⁴

Just as this correspondence drew to a close the League established a Committee of enquiry into alleged Congress persecution of Muslims. The overall conclusion of the 'Pirpur Report' was that the Muslim Community was much better off under the British than under Congress rule. How much truth there was in its charges was never verified. The Congress offered to submit them to the (British) Chief Justice of India, but the League refused and wanted that it should be enquired into by a Royal Commission. In any event, the Viceroy felt that it would be most difficult for Jinnah to prove any general anti-Muslim action on the part of the Congress Government and, the (Provincial) Governors were satisfied that there was no basis for the allegations.²⁵ The point of no return was reached in Congress-League relations. From then onwards, Muslim League scored points one after another at the expense of the mistakes of the Congress and with the indirect help of the Britishers.

24. Jawaharlal Nehru to Jinnah, 16 December 1939. Emphasis added.

25. V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (London, 1957), p. 71.

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Having realised that bilateral talks and negotiations could not bring about Hindu Muslim unity, Nehru reconciles himself to the position that the problem can be solved amicably through the good will of Hindus and Muslims. Nehru wrote to Ahmed Bashir:

It seems clear to me that the unity of a free India can only continue with the goodwill of the Hindus and Muslims. If that goodwill is lacking, that unity will be endangered. I do not see why the fullest cultural freedom should not be allowed to every group, nor do I understand why you should object to a Constituent Assembly where Muslims have a right to elect their own representatives and further, where it is definitely stated and laid down that all minority rights must be settled by agreement and not by a majority vote.²⁶

Here Nehru was reiterating his earlier stand adopted in 1930 regarding the convening of a Constituent Assembly. Being a true democrat he thought that communal differences would slowly disappear once the minorities were guaranteed cultural freedom and Muslims were allowed to elect their representatives to a Constituent Assembly.

Third party, the real bottleneck

Ever since Nehru started thinking about the Hindu-Muslim question in India he had maintained that the presence of the Britishers had tended to aggravate the tension between the two communities and made any settlement between them difficult, if not impossible. "Fundamentally and inevitably the British policy has been one of preventing the Hindus and Muslims from acting together and of playing off one community against another" wrote Nehru²⁷ in his autobiography. Nehru believed that once the Hindus and the Muslims were faced with the prospect of managing the affairs of the country in the absence of a third party, they would hammer out an agreement satisfactory to both. For the British Government always exploited the differences between the Hindus and Muslims to suit their selfish interests.

26. Jawaharlal Nehru to Ahmed Bashir, 26 December 1939.

27. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 460.

Writing to M. K. Gandhi in February 1940, Nehru observed, :
 "The British Government is also reacting in a way unfavourable to us It is carrying on and will carry on its old intrigues on the communal issue, though occasionally it uses a few critical words against the Muslim League in order to soothe the Congress."²⁸ Expressing his disenchantment at the strange mixture of religion and politics he wrote to Maulana Azad:

You will have noticed the rebirth of the idea of pan-Islamism. This is not merely due to Muslim League here or to their organisations. This is fundamentally due to the desire of the British Government to encourage it . . . the main difficulties of the communal problem are due to the attitude of the British Government today.²⁹

'The parting of the ways', an article written on 10 August 1940 i.e. after the Pakistan Resolution was passed by the Muslim League, clearly reflects Nehru's mind at the time. If Hindus and Muslims cannot agree as organised groups it will be unfortunate for India and no one can say what the consequences will be. The communal question is essentially one of protection of vested interests and religion has always been a useful stalking horse for this purpose. Those who have feudal privileges and vested interests fear change and become the camp-followers of British imperialism. The British Government on the other hand delights in using the communal argument to deny freedom, democracy or any major change and to hold on to power and privilege in India. That is the *raison d'être* and justification of communalism in India. The article reveals the extreme frustration of Nehru. He wrote:

. . . It (communalism) lived on invectives, violence and general offensiveness It discovered that what it had valued most in the past — separate electorates — brought little good. In fact they weakened a minority group. Then by the very force of the logic of hatred and separation that it pursued it had to go to the extreme step of demanding a partition of India. The medieval theory of religious groups constituting a political community which collapsed before an advancing nationalism in Europe was revised When nationalism is giving place to internationalism, an ever nar-

28. Jawaharlal Nehru to M. K. Gandhi, 4 February 1940.

29. Jawaharlal Nehru to Maulana Azad, 22 February 1940.

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power creed than nationalism is advanced, and this finds favour and protection with our British rulers. When the world is groping blindly towards a real federation of nations, it is suggested that India should be split up into various parts.³⁰

Nehru probably did not attach much importance to the Pakistan Resolution. He still believed that once the Britishers quit India both the Congress and the Muslim League would come to terms. If they do not come to terms the alternative would be civil war a possibility which Nehru underrated. In a letter written to Syed Mohmud he gave expression to his views. He wrote:

... Personally I see no solution of this problem, however hard one may try, so long as the third party (the British) is not eliminated. We shall inevitably come near a solution when we are forced to agree by circumstances, the alternative being conflict on a big scale. That can only happen when it is clear that neither party can seek the help of the British or any other alien authority. Once this alien authority is excluded we fall back upon ourselves and either agree or fight. In all likelihood we then agree for the prospect of a real struggle that will not be a pleasant one for anybody.³¹

In his reply to the above letter Syed Mahmud branded Nehru's approach to the problem as an 'negative attitude' and added that his argument was that of the stronger party which 'can defeat the weaker one if a conflict comes between the two after the departure of the third party'.³²

Nehru was opposed to the idea of a separate state for Muslims in the sub-continent. At the same time he did not like to keep any unwilling part of the country under pressure. In otherwords he was against a make-believe unity. He also realised that it would be unwise to make a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem a precondition for the withdrawal of the British from India. "The Congress has stated that while it stands by the unity of the India and considers any division fatal for all concerned, still it cannot think in terms of compelling any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against its declared emphatic will" he wrote.³³

30. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Parting of the ways' (article) 10 August

31. Jawaharlal Nehru to Syed Mahmud, 1 February 1942.

32. Syed Mahmud to Jawaharlal Nehru, 5 February 1942.

33. Jawaharlal Nehru to Inayatullah Khan, 8 July 1942. Emphasis added.

"The Muslim League can have Pakistan if they wanted it," Nehru said later, "but on condition that they do not take away other parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan."³⁴

Thereafter events unfolded themselves in quick succession leaving no room for negotiations. The 1945 Simla Conference was really a contest between the Congress and the Muslim League. The League insisted on the right to appoint all Muslims to the Executive Council and the Congress refused to abdicate its status as a national organisation. Jinnah threatened to boycott the Executive Council unless his demands were met and Lord Wavell acquiesced. The veto given to Jinnah was a dangerous precedent that strengthened his hand in the crucial battles to follow.

In the 1946 election the Congress called for a federal constitution with autonomy for the constituent parts and a minimum list of common subjects. The Muslim League stressed the issue of Hindu domination in a united India and the consequent need of separate Muslim homeland i.e. Pakistan. The League won all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Assembly and 427 of the 482 Muslim seats in the provincial legislatures. The authority of the Muslim League was thus established beyond doubt. The stage was now set for the reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the convening of a Constituent Assembly. To achieve this the Cabinet Delegation was despatched from London. The fundamental principle of the cabinet Mission scheme was deceptively simple. The Muslim League was offered a *de facto* Pakistan. The Congress could find a united India, though somewhat emasculated, and an assurance of provincial autonomy.

In the crucial year 1946, Nehru was elected President of the Congress. In a speech to the AICC on 10 July 1946, Nehru said that Congress was committed to participate in the Constituent Assembly but nothing else. About the grouping scheme he was 'brutally candid'. It would probably never come to fruition, he declared.

This infuriated the Muslim League and its leader Jinnah who was given an incomparable wedge to press more openly for Pakistan on grounds of Congress 'tyranny'. At the end of July

34. E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power India* (London, 1964), p. 155.

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the Muslim League withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's long-term plan and called for 'Direct Action' on 16th August, 1946. At the instance of the Viceroy, Nehru met Jinnah at his Bombay residence, on the eve of the 'Direct Action Day'. This meeting lasted for eighty minutes but it did not produce any result. Asked by reporters Jinnah stated "Nothing has happened beyond by facts that we had a general talk. I have nothing more to say. There will be no more meeting between me and Nehru".³⁵

The 'Direct Action Day' was observed as scheduled. The 'Great Calcutta Killing' alone took a heavy toll of eighty human lives with 825 injured in incidents. In a press conference on 16 August 1946, Nehru observed that national and international emergencies called for the formation of the provisional national government at the centre. "We cannot stand still because of the League. We have to move fast. Either we act swiftly and do justice to our responsibilities or face greater disaster and perils." The Congress did act swiftly and in the fateful year of 1947 India was partitioned.

In retrospect, Nehru's attitude towards the Hindu-Muslim question appears to be an error of judgement partly due to his underestimation of the great hold Islam has on Muslims of the sub-continent and partly due to his politico-economic approach to the problem.

Nehru thought that once cultural and linguistic freedom are granted and assured to the minorities, communal problem would fade into insignificance. He felt that a Constituent Assembly to which Muslims could send their representatives on the basis of separate electoral rolls would solve the Hindu-Muslim problem in India. According to him the real problem was economic, all other problems were subsidiary to it. Time and again he exhorted the religious groups particularly the Muslims to completely line up with Indian nationalism in the cause of Indian freedom. He maintained that essentially the conflict between the Congress and the League was a conflict between the lower middle classes with a large mass following and the Muslim feudal and middle classes. This approach was certainly scientific but not very pragmatic. Nehru's assumption that given the fullest cultural and

35. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 August, 1946

linguistic freedoms the minority community will have no room for complaint was proved wrong by the events in the sub-continent. He advocated what might be called 'advanced politics' in a highly traditional society ignoring perhaps the root causes of tension between Hindus and Muslims.

Perhaps Nehru did not take into account the hold that religion with its dogma, tradition, custom, ritual and historical memories has on the minds of men in a premodern, traditional and plural society. He was also obsessed with international developments that he ignored the communal problem in India. It could be that he assumed that Muslims in India would subscribe to the idea of territorial nationalism and would be willing to subordinate to it the sense of separate identity based on religion. This explains his repeated requests to the Muslims to join the nationalist movement and fight for the freedom of the country. It also explains his much publicised but unsuccessful attempts at Muslim mass contact in the late thirties. Of course there were certain nationalist Muslims who lent credibility to the above assumption but they were in a minority. The majority of the Muslims always kept aloof from the Indian National Congress.

As a matter of fact Islam had given to the world a new socio-political order and that it would be impossible for its followers to merge in any other social or political group however important that might be. Islam is extremely uncompromising in this regard. As W. C. Smith observes, "The question of political power and social organisation, so central to Islam, has in the past always been considered in yes or-no terms. Muslims have either had political power or they have not. Never before have they shared it with others."³⁶ What actually happened in India was that an appeal to the Muslims for loyalty to a society other than its own religious one failed.

Like his political 'guru' Gandhi, Nehru also did not succeed in his attempt to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. The course of Indian history and tradition stood against him. Nevertheless he tried earnestly to lay the foundation of a secular state in India. No one can doubt his commitment of non-communal secular nationalism.

36. W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, N. J., 1957), p. 286.

The Easter Rising in Bengal, Chittagong 18 April—7 May 1930

BY

AMIT KUMAR GUPTA

Broadly the Irish and the Indian people were subjected to the same alien rule, similar exploiting system¹—irrespective of the sprinkled imperial justice—and both aspired to attain an identical object. Yet surprisingly the Irish struggle for freedom, till its hour of victory, had only a faint mark on Indian nationalism. The reason certainly was the wide difference between the two countries as regards size, population, resources, ways of life and the structure of society. Besides, the Irish Parliamentary Party had little to offer to its counter-part in India by way of a model. Moreover, the Indian acquaintance with the insurgent Ireland was severely restricted partly by the strict British censorship and partly by the secretive nature of 'Clan-na-Gael' and 'Sinn Fein'. However, the revolutionary developments in Ireland could no longer be suppressed when Irish freedom was recognised in 1921-22 coinciding with the Non-Co-operation movement in India which began with a bang and ended in a whimper. In the frustrating aftermath of a relinquished agitation Indian nationalists tended to revive old formulas in the name of new lines of political action. With Gandhi languishing in jail the orthodox non-co-operators took refuge in the philanthropic reformism of *charkha* (spinning wheel), *swadeshi* (indigenous products) and the campaign against untouchability. (No-changers.) Others found comfort in the labyrinth of parliamentary processes, imagining that they could compel the British to accept a settlement through legislative wrangling. (Pro-changers.) Both, in consequence, evaded the means of mass movement leaving the reactionary forces of communalism enough grounds to flourish. The

1. *Hindu Prakash*, 7 March 1881, compared the lot of Irish peasants with those of the Indian *rayats*. Bombay Native Newspaper Report, 1881.

disillusioned youth returned to the ways of individual terrorism and the vicious circle of expensive search for arms, political robberies for funds and absconding to avoid arrest. Yet, at this hour of bewilderment, the militant nationalists' faith in armed struggle must have been strengthened at the instance of Sinn Fein success in Ireland. Eamon De Valera also wanted to convey to the Indians that it was "only through the influence of fear and the pressure of force" that Britain had ever been brought to consider the claims of others.² Indistinct links renewed at this point between stray Indian extremists and Irish Americans. Even the would-be Marxists, before planting Bolshevism in India, toyed sometimes with the Sinn Fein style.³ But none in India was really interested in the civil war sweeping Ireland from 1922 or in the controversy raging there between Michael Collins and De Valera. The militant nationalists of India in fact could look profitably for emulative Sinn Fein examples only in the preceding years of Irish history. A group of such militants under Suriva Kumar Sen in Bengal discovered in the Easter Rising of Dublin, April 1916,⁴ a suitable exciting pattern. Sinn Feinism was thus

2. *India and Ireland*, address by Eamon De Valera, delivered at the India Freedom Dinner of the Friends of Freedom for India, on 28 February 1920, Central Opera House, New York.

3. 'Comrade Ghaté—Our First Secretary' S. A. Dange, in 'S. V. Ghaté—Our First General Secretary, A memorial Volume, Communist Party Publication, no. 10, pp. 5-6, Aug. 1971, New Delhi.

4. The Easter Rising of 1916 took place during a war-time turmoil in which the Irish militant nationalists, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Citizens' Army, wanted to take up arms against the British rule with the aid of Germany. The plot thickened when the revolutionaries arranged for German arms to be secretly brought to Ireland and planned a rising in Dublin on the Easter Parade Day (Sunday, 23 April) of the illegally-armed Irish Volunteers. However, the German ship "Aud", carrying arms, failed in its mission as Roger Casement—the go-between the rebels and the Kaiser's Government—was caught following his landing on the Irish shore. The news led to an order countermanding the Volunteers' Parade issued by their Chief, Mac Neil, whom the rebel leaders did not take into confidence. The British authorities also sensed danger and prepared for arrests of the politically suspicious characters. The original plan thus misfiring there was no point in proceeding with the rising which, in any case, was foredoomed to failure. But the Revolutionary Military Council, who suspended the rising on 23rd, unanimously decided at the height of the "the delirium of the brave" to commence the rising at 12 noon on Easter Monday (24 April). It all began at the appointed hour when the General

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inspirational in the daring stormy outbreak in Chittagong during during the Easter of 1930.

Over and above the difference of magnitude (as was natural in semi-armed Ireland and totally disarmed India) there was no objective resemblance between the circumstances of the Irish and Chittagong risings. The theme of the Irish rising was based on a World War situation in which Germany—the enemy of Britain—became an ally of the insurgents who hoped to thrive on German military aid. Besides, Ireland speedily developed a Volunteer organisation which supplied the material as well as the forum for insurgency. Again, the Gaelic revivalist movement and the legacy of Wolfe Tone, John Mitchel, Thom. Davies and O'Donovan Rossa developed the mood and offered an emotional justification of the Irish rising. Moreover, the Irish labour militants and a section of Irish socialists played crucial roles in the organisation of the revolt.⁵ All these were typical Irish developments of 1916 and they had no parallels in India in 1930 or in Bengal where Suriya Sen's men rose. In the broader national context the Bengali regionalism, though remarkably alive throughout the

Post Office, occupied by the main body, was turned into the rebel headquarters and an Irish Republic was solemnly proclaimed. Splinter groups took position in various other parts of the city like the Four Courts, St. Stephens Green, Mt. St. Bridge, Westland Row Station etc. Martial law was introduced in Dublin but the British troops were unequal to their task of suppressing the rising till the arrival of reinforcement and Sir John Maxwell. On 29 April the rebels surrendered after week-long resistance and only when the British threatened with large-scale destruction of the city. Then followed the execution of rebel leaders in batches, the deportation of their ranks and the oppression of British forces on the population. The rising failed but the shock therapy worked as Pearse, the rebel Commander-in-Chief, was reported to have remarked: "When we are wiped out, people will blame us for everything, condemn us . . . After few years they will see the meaning of what we tried to do." This prophecy was vindicated when the released prisoners, in the following year, were accorded a heroes' welcome in Dublin. Thereafter the vast majority of Irish people unquestioningly followed the Easter Rising tradition and supported the Sinn Fein (the political heir of the Easter rebels) till the hour of its final victory.

5. Irish trade-unions, especially Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, were strongly embedded to national politics since 1914. Socialist James Connolly and his Citizens' Army were among the leaders and participants of the rising of 1916.

1920s and 1930s.⁶ was a retarding force rather than a resurgent one. The existence of a volunteer force (*Seva Dal*), created⁷ in the country as early as in 1923 to aid Indian National Congress, was too innocuous and committed to peaceful functions to be of any use for insurgency purposes. It is, however, true that a show of militarism on Irish or "Black Shirt" model by Bengal Congress Volunteers under Subhas Chandra Bose, during the Congress Session in Calcutta in 1928, did fascinate the imagination of young Bengal. But socialism was yet a much misconstrued far-cry raised by novices and desperados in a gold-rush, copying trade-unionist economism in a predominantly agriculturist society but hardly visualising to fit it into any anti-colonial armed struggle.⁷

Subjectively, however, the two risings resembled as regards the rebel reactions to the prevailing political panorama. Both the groups were impatient of the supposed national inaction, angry at—what they considered—the imbecility of public figures—and intensely hateful of the colonial rule. Both were essentially middleclass romantic revolutionists who hoped to set heroic examples of organised armed struggle and wanted to act as "a prophetic shock minority", arousing an apathetic nation. The martyrs of the Easter rising resented a stable period of Irish nationalism dominated by the Irish Parliamentary party, ruled by the triumvirate of Redmond, Dillon and Devlin—away from the people and relying on constitutional intrigues. Irish constitu-

6. *Banglar Katha*—a weekly brought out by C. R. Dass in its first edition of 30 September 1921 displayed characteristic Bengali regionalism by writing about a Bengali's "special place in the world," his "mission to perform" and his duty "to become a true Bengali." Broomfield, J. H., *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal*, p. 220, Los Angeles, 1968.

Then, the concern for a Greater Bengal "Bengali in race, language and culture" was apparent in the resolution that J. M. Sengupta sent to the Congress Committee on the re-drawing of provincial boundaries for consideration. *Advance*, 28 July 1931, cited in Chatterji, Bhola, *Some Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen Thirties*, p. 20, Cal. 1969.

7. It must, however, be conceded that the working class participation in the Indian national movement was visible during the anti-Simon Commission agitation of 1928-29 and in the Congress session in Calcutta in 1928 when the jute mill workers occupied the venue to register their demand for India's attainment of complete independence.

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nationalism reached its peak when the tottering Liberal Government of 1905 was forced to pass the Third Home Rule Act in exchange of the support of Irish Parliamentary Party. Thus apparently Redmond and his followers made a good show in British Parliament preparing for a transfer of power to Irish middleclass and landed gentry. Feinism in this context appeared to be a moribund force, armed struggle a Quixotic exercise and the horizon of nationalism as mere skylight of Home Rule. Virile and romantic Ireland looked "dead and gone.... with O'Leary in grave,"⁸ even before the coming of the Great War bringing an artificial boom of prosperity to Irish farmers and traders. But in reality the Irish—Anglicised, illusioned and fettered in chains of gold—were living in doles of concessions and not on the rights of a distinct people. The certainty of the North remaining in the Union, the shelving of the Home Rule during the war as "a promissory note payable after death"⁹ and the exploitation of Irish valour for imperial security—betrayed irreparable holes in Redmond's constitutional facade. Was it not an opportune moment for the daring to remonstrate and act for a new vision?

A different situation in Bengal produced almost similar mental urge. The Pro-changer C. R. Das—whose Swaraj Party outclassed a grumbling group of No-changers—was unable to give Bengal any new direction. The difficulty of maintaining a motley Swarajist rank, the distribution of privileges in Calcutta Corporation, the attempted communal adjustment between Hindu and Muslim elites and the digressions of a futile *satyagraha* (a non-violent civil resistance) against the *Mohunt* (priest) of Tarakeswar temple sapped all Das's energies. The extremists¹⁰ in the province—busy reviving old methods of individual killing (like Day's murder by Gopinath Saha in January 1924) and political robberies (like Sankharitola Post Office dacoity in August 1923)—were also unable to break the colourless political

8. This was W. B. Yeats's version in his poem, *September*, 1913.

9. It was a comment of Roger Casement, one of the organisers of the rising of 1916.

10. The secret revolutionary societies of *Jugantar* and *Anushilan* commenced functioning since the days of the *Swadeshi* movement. These rival organisations were of a federal character with various affiliated groups in different localities acting almost independently.

monotony. Das's death in 1925 was followed by a long-drawn succession struggle. J. M. Sengupta inherited Das's "triple crown" (Presidentship of Bengal Provincial Congress, leadership of Swaraj Party in Bengal and Legislative Assembly and Mayorship of Calcutta Municipal Corporation) with the support of Gandhi (who came to Calcutta following the death of Das) and when other contenders were in disarray, Byomkesh Chakravarti becoming a "responsivist co-operator" and Subhas Chandra Bose suffering in Burma jail. Another contender, B. N. Sasmal, led the opposition and continued a fight for leadership. The schism resulted in a virtual split when two sets of Congress candidates contested for Calcutta Corporation in March 1927 in which Sasmals' party lost.¹¹ But the casualty was merely Sasmal, who never fully recovered, and factionalism continued unabated. The so-called—C. R. Das-bred—Big Five¹² also resented "the intruder from Chittagong," J. M. Sengupta, and patronised the newly released Bose, Sarat Chandra Bose's most beloved youngest brother. Bose—promising militancy and vague radicalism—was a favourite among the revolutionary elements who invariably took refuge in the organisational set up of Bengal Provincial Congress. His hobnobbing with the *Jugantar* people in the Congress led to the rancorous *Anushilan* members rallying behind Sengupta. There thus developed two formidable line-ups, a *Jugantar* and Big-Five—supported Bose confronting *Anushilan* and Gandhiite (No-changers originally) supported Sengupta with the Swarajists and Congressmen evenly divided. Thereafter it was all mud-slinging for sometime showing the *bourgeois* political opportunism at its worst with the two groups publicly accusing each other of nepotism, insincerity to national cause and the use of questionable sources for raising resources.¹³ There was hardly any ideology involved in the squabbles—though Bose himself wanted posterity to imagine that Sengupta's "unquestionable obedience to the *Mahatma* (Gandhi)" was the root of all

11. Bose, Subhas Chandra, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 123, 1964, Cal.

12. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Shri Nalini Ranian Sarkar, Shri Tulsi Chandra Goswami, Shri Nirmal Chandra Chunder and Shri Sarat Chandra Bose.

13. Chatterji Bhola, *Some Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen Thirties*, p. 4.

troubles.¹⁴ The guns at Chittagong roared at this point drowning the vulgarity and the helplessness of the hour.

It would, however, be wrong to presume that the sentimental revolutionists of Chittagong clearly measured up the political situation. They could not have probably done so as (participants of middleclass dominated national politics. The facts that Surjya Sen's group in 1929 noisily fought for the control of Chittagong District Congress Committee, invited Bose to preside over their District Conference ignoring the local hero-Sengupta, entangled themselves in factional feuds leading to litigations, injuries and death (of Sukhendu Bikash Dutt) prove that they were compromising with the existing political situation. But such compromises were but only natural. Did the Irish Republican Brotherhood not compromise with Redmond's pressure in June 1914 for admitting his nominees to their governing body of Irish Volunteers? Did Pearse not speak from a Home Rule platform immediately before his joining I.R.B. in 1912? There is no doubt that the Chittagong group of revolutionaries had a soft corner for an aggressive Bose¹⁵ and that, too, on account of their understanding with the *Jugantar*.

A glimpse about the growth of a revolutionary organisation in Chittagong will further clarify its position vis-a-vis the extremist politics in Bengal as well as its object in preparing for an adventurist solo rising. A secret society sprang up in Chittagong round about 1918¹⁶ when the tension of the planned insurrection of 1915-16 was still alive.¹⁷ The group was small, obviously local and yet uncertain as to its affiliation to federal bodies like *Jugantar* and *Anushilan*. The group even then was dominated by Surjya Sen, a teacher of mathematics in National High

14. Bose, S.C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 112.

15. An interview in Calcutta with Ganesh Ghosh, a renowned revolutionary of the past and a well-known Communist (C.P.M.) leader at present, dated 18 June 1971.

16. In 1918 Surjya Sen returned to Chittagong after obtaining his B.A. degree from Berhampore College.

17. In the wake of the *Swadeshi* movement and through Aravinda Ghose's efforts—revolutionary politics was said to have been introduced in Chittagong. However, the picture of this initial phase is rather obscure.

School of the locality (and hence popularly called "Master da"), and a few others like Anurup Sen, Nagen Sen and Charubikash Dutta. It also included the important names of Ambika Chakravarti, Nirmal Sen and Anantalal Sinha. The organisation was not formed on typical Hindu revivalist line and thus attracted Muslim youngmen like Afsaruddin and Dalilur Rahaman. Genesh Gosh also joined the group soon thereafter. These militants—though firmly committed to ideals of armed struggle—participated in the political agitation of the time in Chittagong centering round the coolie strike in Sylhet tea gardens in May 1921, the Gurkha outrage in Chandour and Assam—Bengal Railway and steamer strikes. This chain of incidents threw Chittagong into the ferment of Non-Co-operation movement. By 1920 Surjya Sen, in fact, founded in Gandhian style a Sanyashram which was apparently designed to assist the Congress politics but in reality a shelter for secretive get-together. The first crisis developed in the group on the question of its affiliation and a split resulted in September 1921 when Charubikash Dutta and some others joined *Anushilan* against a majority decision to collaborate with *Jugantar*.¹⁸ Thus two parallel organisations grew up in Chittagong, led by Charubikash Dutta and Surjya Sen respectively, ostensibly for the same purpose but at logger heads with each other as usual in such cases. Surjya Sen's group, like their rivals in Chittagong, kept up the promise given by the revolutionists in Bengal to the *Mahatma* about restraining their adventurism during the Non-Co-operation movement.¹⁹ They, however, carefully avoided arrests, trained cadres militarily, searched for smuggled arms and desperately looked for money. They did not take Gandhiji's promise of *Swaraj* (self-rule) within one year seriously and tried to be in readiness for an armed struggle. But how to launch an armed

18. According to Ganesh (during an interview in Calcutta on 17 June 1971) the group remained independent maintaining "cordial relations" with some *Jugantar* leaders. Anantalal Sinha in his book, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, Cal., 1969, also gives a similar impression. But in his confessional statement in Burdwan jail on 3 January 1925 (Home pol. file No. 253 of 1925)—an enlightening document as regards the details of the newly formed Chittagong group—Ananta Sinha specifically mentioned that they joined *Jugantar*. Police records also often referred to Surjya Sen as the leader of a *Jugantar* group.

19. Bose, S.C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 60.

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struggle, in what propensity and with what plan? On these there was no light—no ray of hope. They were impressed with the Non-Co-operation movement but could not uphold non-violence. They upheld violence but did not know what to do with it. In this uncertain circumstance, methods were mistaken for objects and the revolutionary energies were squandered in political dacoities and in the subsequent legal defence. The looting of the house of a money-lender in Paroikora village in 1922 and the snatching of Assam Bengal Railway's handsome money in 1923 amply illustrate the point. The money, of course, acquired smuggled guns—but guns themselves could never produce revolutionary programme. The flight of Surjya Sen and his followers on 24 December 1923 from "Suluk bahar" (their hide-out in the outskirts of Chittagong town) to the neighbouring hills, the hot pursuit of armed British police, their heroic fight back in Nagarkhana hill and their subsequent arrest²⁰—were all very impressive but intrinsically futile. Fortunately all of them were released due to the brilliant handling of the case by their defence counsel, J. M. Sengupta himself, and the ridiculous muddling of evidence by the police. The Chittagong heroes came out of the confinement but only to grope in the wilderness.

The *Jugantar* revolutionaries—a leadership on whom the Chittagong group always looked up—were not forth-coming with any concrete line of action. In fact the hard core of *Jugantar* was swinging between the pretence of violence and the credence of non-violence. The *Dadas* (elder brothers) of *Jugantar* and *Anushilan* were more interested in somehow maintaining their groups than running into risks. In their urge to devise a practicable future programme (and as no programme was practicable in the existing disunity) some in the rival camps started a move for

20. Surjya Sen, Ambika Charavati and Rajen Das, in utter exhaustion and for fear of arrest and torture, swallowed potassium cyanide. Being oxidised the poison could not kill them and the police found them unconscious. The rest of the party—Ananta Sinha, Upen or Abani Bhattacharya and Deben De managed to escape, though Ananta was eventually arrested in Calcutta. Nirmal Sen, whose unpunctuality led to his missing the whole "action," and other participants could not be involved by the police. It should also be stated here that the group soon murdered the police Sub-Inspector, Prafulla Roy, who was responsible for Ananta's capture.

an understanding among revolutionists in Chittagong. But before it could make any real progress the Government struck with ordinances and the cream of Chittagong revolutionaries entered into prisons in batches in October 1924. However, Surjya Sen managed to escape from the police not only in Chittagong but also in the Shovabazar hideout in Calcutta when a good number of extremists were arrested in connection with Dakshineswar Bomb case in November 1925. A year later Surjya Sen was finally arrested in Calcutta in October 1926. The two years of his absconding life, between 1924 and 1926, were surrounded by mystery as little could be known beyond the fact that he visited places in Bengal, Assam and the U.P. with a view to organise revolutionary activities.²¹ The real nature of Surjya Sen's exploits is now any body's guess. But in all likelihood Sen was probably trying to assess if the various secret societies were thinking about a concerted armed rising in the fashion of what had previously been attempted by Rashbehari Bose in 1912 or Jatin Mukherji in 1915. The authorities were aware of the formation of a New Violence Party in which Surjya Sen's name featured along with Sachin Sanyal of the U.P. and Charubikash Dutta of Chittagong *Anushilan*. The party was formed as a measure of attempted unity between the youngsters of *Anushilan* and *Jugantar* following the arrests of 1924. The younger men of both sides wanted to continue violent activities in defiance of their senior leaders—who favoured a cessation of all acts for some time. In fact some literature in this connection was also uncovered by the police from Shovabazar hide-out.²² But the prospect of any concerted action must have appeared very dim in 1925 with arrests in Dakshineswar Bomb Case in Calcutta and Kakori train robbery in the U.P. But Surjya Sen continued his plea for unity

21. This is what Ganesh Ghosh mentioned in his article "Surjya Sen (Masterda)" in a memorial volume, *Surjya Sen Smriti*, ed. by Biplobtirtha Chattagram *Smriti Samstha*, p. 17, Cal. 1971. It is confirmed by the U.P. revolutionaries like J. C. Chatterji in his book, *In Search of Freedom*, p. 337, Cal. 1967 and Prof. N. K. Nigam of the Third Delhi Conspiracy case fame during his conversation with the author in May 1971 in New Delhi.

22. Abstract of Intelligence, Bengal Police, vol. XXXX, 1926. Cited in Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 219, Cal. 1969. In his book, *Chattagram Astragar Lunthan*, Charubikash Dutta also referred to this move.

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and unified programme throughout.²³ It remained, however, a very fond hope, a wishful thinking—unlikely to be fulfilled in the partisan environment of Bengal militants.

By the end of 1928 Surjya Sen and his followers returned from prisons one after the other.²⁴ In December 1928 they attended the Congress session in Calcutta and supported Bose's move for India's claim of complete Independence as against the Nehru Report advocating India's Dominion Status. They were moved by the performance of Bose's Volunteers, Calcutta, and accepted the *Jugantar* idea of dominating the local Congress organisation—though they never really believed that this could be an end in itself. They also attended a secret meeting of *Jugantar* and *Anushilan* to forge a compromise formula, which, however, would not materialise in the background of a growing *Anushilan*—Sengupta and *Jugantar*—Bose rift. In February 1929 the Chittagong group began controlling the District Congress Committee when Surjya Sen was elected as Secretary. In May 1929 they organised the District Congress Conference with a dazzling march past of volunteers under Ganesh Ghosh. In September 1929 they elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Congress Conference and in the Conference itself in November 1929 voted on *Jugantar* line in favour of Bose against Sengupta. But beneath the surface the group had already become impatient of tall talks of the old guard, tired of inaction in the name of organising the Congress and disgusted at disunity and stereotyped dacoities and treacheries, assassinations and arrests. Their plan for a rising in April 1930 was thus as much an attempt to strike a stirring blow on the British authority as to resent and rise above the terroristic traditionalism.

The actual plan of the rising was preceded by some general preparation. For the newly released Chittagong leaders it was

23. Satish Pakrashi in his book, *Agnijuger Kahini*, and Nirajan Sen in his article "Bir biplabi Surjya Sen" in a memorial volume, *Surjya Sen Smriti*, mentioned about Surjya Sen's concern for unity in most unequivocal terms.

24. The days of release of Chittagong detainees: (a) Ganesh Ghosh on 19.9.28. (b) Ananta Sinha on 8.9.28 (c) Lokenath Bal on 18.9.28. (d) Ambika Chakravarti on 28.9.28. (e) Surjya Sen on 13.9.28. (f) Nirmal Sen on 27.11.28.

From the Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

like setting their house in order and make up for their absence. Old contacts were renewed, arms left in a hurry were traced back and recruitment commenced. The occupation of the District Congress Office in the town provided them with an excellent venue and a suitable disguise. Physical culture clubs (like those of Sadarghat, Rahmatganj, Chandanpura, Asadganj etc.), youth organisation (like *Juba Samity* led by Ganesh Ghosh) and a Students' Association (led by Lokenath Bal) were brought into existence simultaneously. Demonstrations of physical exercises were continually arranged (in which Lokenath Bal used to stop running automobiles and Ananta Sinha used to twist iron bars) to emulate the youth.²⁵ Emotionalism was also in full play to sway the young through rhetorical extravagance. Occasions of the conferences, in May 1929 (of the District Congress, the youth, the students and the women) were utilised for this purpose. Bose in his presidential speech at the Congress Conference was reluctant to believe that Gandhi's non-violence could achieve Indian independence. Jyotish Ghosh and Nripen Banerji in their presidential addresses to the youth and students appealed fervently their audiences to come forward to the service of the motherland. Posters depicting ideas like "the agony under foreign rule", placards bearing mottos like "the country first and thereafter justice and religion", call to youngmen like "Yonder is the altar to the goddess of shackles—Will it remain upright forever?" and debates on issues like "the sword is mightier than the pen" indicate the careful nursing of a rebellious mood. It was again apparent in a leaflet inviting the youth to be awakened, for the unhappy motherland "eagerly awaits the employment of energies slumbering in the young."²⁶ The climax of emotionalism was reached on 15 September 1929 when the group mourned the death of Jatindra Nath Das²⁷ by taking out a delirious procession of nearly 2000 people through the streets of Chittagong town with banners like

25. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol. file No. 7/4, 1932.

26. *Ibid.* Also Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, pp. 256-262.

27. Jatindra Nath Das, arrested for complicity in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, was detained in Lahore Central Jail. He went on hunger strike against the brutal treatment of political prisoners and died in jail on 13 September 1929 after fasting for 63 days.

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"He went away trampling with his feet the fear of death
And called upon everyone to clang the shackles".

Jatindra Nath's photographs (in the volunteer uniform of 1928) adorned the District Congress Office with the message:

"A soldier's life is the life for me
A soldier's death so India is free"

The occasion was reminiscent of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in Ireland in September 1915 when electrifying speeches were delivered by Pearse and Connolly with tremendous impact. In the memory of Jatindra Nath the Chittagong group (most of whom personally knew him, especially, Ganesh Ghosh, and thus deeply upset at his loss) attempted to attain similar effect on the audience when Lokenath Bal spoke of "fire in hearts for the destruction of British Government," Ananta Sinha talked about "blood boiling at fever pitch" and Ganesh Ghosh called for the strength of thousand Jatindra Nath's "to strike terror in the heart of tyrannical Government."²⁸ The difference between incidents relating to O'Donovan Rossa and Jatindra Nath was one of degree and stature and not of the content or the desired effect. An environment propitious for what Surjya Sen later described as "terroristic romance"²⁹ was fast developing. It was a prelude to the "death programme" of Surjya Sen and his men.

The theme of the "death programme" was a sudden rising by a determined lot occupying the vantage points of Chittagong town, declaring a free Chittagong and then trying to defend the freedom—however short-lived—with their lives. It was in tune with the "heroic, tragic lunacy of Sinn Fein"³⁰ or the "poetic license" of the Easter rebels.³¹ Following some elaboration the plan aimed at attacking the police and Auxiliary Force

28. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol File No. 7/4, 1932.

29. Statement of Charbikash Dutta (Ex-detenu) in Chittagong prison, recorded on 15.5.30. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

30. Yeats's comment in his letter to Lady Gregory, 8 May 1916. Martin, F.X., *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*: Dublin 1916, p. IX, London, 1967.

31. Pearse, Plunkett and Mac Donagh were poets and Connolly was the visionary with a forceful pen.

of India (an irregular British army wing, heavily armed to deal with military emergency) establishments, ransacking their armou-ries, disrupting the railway and telegraphic communications, brutally massacring the town's European population to avenge the age-long British oppression as symbolised in the butchery of Jalianwala Bagh (13 April 1919) and proclaiming a Republic. Then the rebels would take possession of the town, distribute arms among the people and dig out defensive rings centering round a headquarter. When the British army would attempt to regain control over the town in full strength the rebels should withstand the pressure and finally collect themselves at the head-quarter for the last resistance to the last man. The site for the finale was decided to be the centrally Located Collector's *Cutcherry* at Fairy hill.³² The relatively high altitude of the place and the existence of a water reservoir were the considerations for its choice to serve the purpose of General Post Office Building in Dublin of April 1916. For this military adventure it was decided to form the branch of an imaginary Indian liberation army—not yet born but expected to be born someday. Its name, Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch), was reminiscent of Irish Republican Army of the post-Easter rising days. A revolutionary council of five, similar to what the Irish Easter rebels had in 1916, was created with Surjya Sen as President and Ambika Chakravarti, Nirmal Sen, Ananta Sinha and Ganesh Ghosh as members. But how did the plan come about and who did originate it?

Ananta Sinha, who in his books always over-narrated his own role in the rising, has no hesitation in ascribing the plan to Ganesh Ghosh.³³ Ghosh in his turn is inclined to share the credit of planning collectively by saying that all the leading figures were thinking, more or less, in the same direction and Ananta Sinha and he himself might have taken some initiative. Ghosh's version was generally true and all the leaders, following their return to public life, were impatient for undertaking a daring "action". But the cue certainly came from Ghosh who spent his stay in Midnapore jail in intellectual company and in reading

32. An interview in Calcutta with Ganesh Ghosh, 17 June 1971.

33. Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 282, Cal. 1969.

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the history of national military exploits in general and about rebellious Ireland in particular. Books on Irish revolutionists in prisons in Bengal must have been scanty³⁴ but still enough to excite his imagination. A study of the Irish rising and the volunteer organisation revealed that a sudden organised attack by a disciplined band of revolutionists could achieve limited objectives and demoralise the ruling forces.³⁵ All the Chittagong leaders, in some form or the other, passed through in jail a phase of intense introspection. They were finding it increasingly difficult to comprehend and organise violent armed struggles, simultaneously planned and worked out, in various parts of vast country. They became realists enough to realise that any grand project was beyond their capabilities and thus decided to select for themselves a moderate but exemplary role with a limited object in view. Their object was to remind the Indian people of the glorious tradition of anti-colonial armed struggle, to create a symbol for the brave to strive and to appeal to the virility of a nation. Ganesh Ghosh, therefore, had no difficulty in devising a blue-print. He soon exchanged ideas with Ananta Sinha and together they sold to Surjya Sen on 15 October 1929³⁶ the scheme of a collective rise and fall. If the death in Dublin came through inflaming impulse the death in Chittagong was to come through cool calculations.

Once the plan was agreed upon the group sprang into "sudden" and "unusual life" in the beginning of 1930, meeting

34. In the interview Ganesh Ghosh could recall reading Daniel Breen's *My Struggle for Irish Freedom* and "few other books". The biography of another Irish leader—*Michael Collins and the Making of Modern Ireland* was quite popular at that time. Besides, old issues of journals like "Contemporary History" and "19 Century and After" were also available. Moreover, the police searches following the rising in Chittagong resulted in the discovery of *Life of Eamon De Valera* from Ganesh Ghosh's house and the copy of a speech of M. Henry Barbousse entitled "Against Imperialism" from the District Congress Office in Surjya Sen's exercise book. (Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932. Home Pol. File No. 5/4, 1932.

35. An interview in Calcutta with Ganesh Ghosh, 17 June 1971.

36. Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 283, Cal. 1969.

constantly in some places including the District Congress Office.³⁷ A target date was fixed which, in fact, turned out to be the Easter of 1930—not Easter Monday as it was in 1916 but Good Friday.³⁸ A fresh search for smuggled arms was followed by an elaborate curriculum for the recruits. Secret societies invariably adhere to some ritualistic patterns of initiation. The practice in Irish Republican Brotherhood was the administering of a solemn oath “in the presence of Almighty God” swearing allegiance to Irish Republic and subservience to the “commands of superior officers.”³⁹ The custom followed in the secret societies of Bengal also had a melodramatic religious touch like swearing before the image of goddess Kali (who symbolises strength) and offering her blood from a small self-inflicted wound. The Chittagong group in 1928–29 recovered from this religiosity and emphasized only on the recruits’ oath about secrecy and loyalty to the party.⁴⁰ Surjya Sen—who always shunned ritualistic exhibitionism—was an idealist and not a materialist.⁴¹ However, he certainly rose above the terroristic conventionalism when he was stealthily recruiting women to his group much to the annoyance of others, who still clung to “one Helen causing ruination of the whole Troy” like notion.⁴² Naturally no Countess Markievicz of

37. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932. Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

38. The Chittagong leaders maintain that this was not deliberate. Anantha Sinha in his book, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, and Ganesh Ghosh in his interview on 17 June 1971, agreed that the date of the rising was kept shifting as preparations were found to be incomplete till it was finally settled on 18 April. However, one should remember that a vital part of the whole plan, namely, the killing of the Europeans, was drawn on the assumption that the white people would assemble in their club premises at the night of Good Friday. How could the entire rising be fortuitously taking place on Good Friday if a part of it was thus pre-determined?

39. Martin, F. X., “Mc Cullough, Hobson and republican Ulster”, *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*: Dublin 1916, p. 97.

40. Confession of Fakir Sen, 7, 8 & 9 May 1930, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, 1 March 1932, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

41. Surjya Sen’s last few letters to his sister-in-law immediately before his execution on 12 January 1934 clearly bear this out. These letters were recently found and published in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 12 January 1971.

42. When Surjya Sen’s young wife Pushpakuntala Devi, who suffered the ignominy that her charms could not hold Sen to the household, died in 1928 Sen’s followers literally congratulated him at his “relief” and “free-

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Dublin was associated with the rising in Chittagong of 1930.⁴³ But there were young heroes as reckless as the Irish rebels of 1916. They were screened for the "death programme" with an eye to their militancy, reliability and young age. Youth was obviously the most cherished quality as only the young could be indifferent to worldly attractions, romantic to spill their blood for a cause and irresponsible to defy death. The average age of the insurrectionists in Chittagong was 22 years and some were below 16. They were trained to ride horses, use guns, drive automobiles and respond to military discipline. They were indoctrinated through available emotional patriotic stuff⁴⁴ and hardened to kill and die.⁴⁵

A mobilisation chart was made, plans of attack on the military targets were accurately drawn and timings were exactly synchronised to derive the maximum effect of abruptness. The idea of political robbery was scrupulously avoided and it was resolved to rise funds by collection among members themselves, and if necessary by stealing their family properties.⁴⁶ Leather ammunition bags, khaki uniforms and sparkling badges to suit the military occasion were prepared. Numerous implements as well as auto-

dom". Theirs was a queer but spontaneous reaction. After all, the ideal as a patriot in India was predominantly ascetic.

43. Leading ladies like Pritilata Waddadar and Kalpana Dutta appeared only in the latter stage of Surjya Sen's activities in Chittagong, 1931-33, and thus they are beyond the scope of this study.

44. These include very digestible Bengali books like *Aandaman Kahini*, *Deshar Bhasa*, *Dwipantarar Katha* and *Nirbasiter Atma Katha*, biographies like *Deshabandhu Smriti*, *Parindrer Atma Kahini*, *Kanailal* and *Garibaldi* and serious books like *Anandamath*, *Swaraj Gita* and *Banglar Biplabbad*. Statements of Sahairam Das, Fakir Sen and Lalmohan Sen, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, File No. 7/4, 1932.

45. In groups they often discussed elaborately as to their own death (confession of Fakir Sen, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case) and the manner in which they should annihilate the enemy (an interview with Ganesh Ghosh). To get adjusted to the sight of blood they watched surgical operations and visited places where animals were sacrificed or butchered. (Sinha, Ananta, *Agnigarva Chhatragram*, p. 303).

46. In this connection the guardians in Chittagong lodged several complaints to the police against their wards. A typical example was Madhav Sen's complaint on 8 April 1930 against his son—Fakir Sen. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

mobiles for use were arranged. But the incredible feature during this phase was the success of the rebels in building an armour of secrecy which the British intelligence could not pierce. The police was always anxious to take care of the Chittagong detenus since their release and meticulously arranged a watch system for 24 hours by 22 men.⁴⁷ The authorities in Calcutta were reported to have secured a clue as to the apprehension of a rising on Irish example either in Chittagong or in Barisal.⁴⁸ It is not clear how seriously they treated the information but the police vigilance did certainly increase in Chittagong and the Superintendent of Police himself took over the supervision of watchers under the special instruction of D.I.G. Calcutta.⁴⁹ Yet no useful intelligence about the plan of Surjya Sen and his followers was forthcoming to the police although the group was visibly all bustle. The Chittagong police then decided to relax the watch between 13 and 18 April to lure the Chittagong rebels. It was thought that they "in a state of fancied security might, by their movements, convey some inklings as to their intention."⁵⁰ The stroke of duplicity eventually proved to be fatal as the rising was scheduled precisely on 18 April. Throughout the Chittagong police did not know that their watchers were being watched by a counter-espionage group of the rebels. This system in fact enabled them to hide Ramkrishna Biswas and Tarakeswar Dastidar, who were injured while manufacturing bombs during the preparatory phase. The group was also following a method of closely watching each other or "mutual vigilance" as an insurance against internal treachery. Surjya Sen practically saved the situation when he decisively opposed a move by the majority of his council for taking into confidence an old and well-known comrade who deliberately chose to visit Chittagong—following a long absence—just before the rising.⁵¹ But the police was most

47. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

48. D.G.I. Police. Bengal to Bengal Gov. No. 13750, 28 Nov. 1929. Home Pol. File No. 4/9, 1931.

49. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Sinha. Apanta, *Agnigarva Chhattagram*, pp. 448-49.

misled when Suriya Sen and his group carried out an ingenious plan. A leaflet signed by Suriya Sen, Ambika Chakravarti and Ganesh Ghosh invited the people of Chittagong to enrol themselves as *Satyagrahas* (non-violent civil resisters) for disobeying sedition laws in the town in view of the commencement of a nation-wide Civil Disobedience movement.⁵² The leaflet was issued on 17 April—a day in advance of the planned rising—and supplied the police with a satisfying *raison d'être* for the crisp movements of the group. Thus all governmental precautions failed not due to any negligence but—as discovered later on—to “the abnormal cunning and craft of the conspirators.”⁵³ When a question was raised in British Parliament about the failure of Indian intelligence concerning the outrage, Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India spoke, as the men in Dublin Castle did in 1916, that the authorities in Chittagong were poised for large-scale arrests on 20 April and thus could not precede the rising.⁵⁴ The “*Satyagrahi* Leaflet” reminds one of the Castle Document widely publicised in the Republican circles at the nick of the rising on 19 April. The “Document”, appearing like a decoded British message, conveyed an intolerable suggestion that the Dublin authorities were ready to round up all Irish leaders, moderates and radicals. However, the “Castle Document” was forged to impress upon those who would rise the necessity of a rising and the “*Satyagrahi* Leaflet” was fabricated to convince the authorities that the rebels did not mean to rise. It should be accepted that both the tricks worked.

On 18 April the Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch) struck exactly at ten in the night.⁵⁵ The action commenced with distribution of three kinds of leaflets. The first was an appeal to the youth to join the ranks of the army at its hour of victory. The second was a call to the people to produce “dead

52. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Reply of Sir S. Hoare, Secy. of State for India to Mr. Molson, M.P. 21 March 1932. Home Pol. file No. 4/9, 1931. Also, Hansard 263, H.C. Debate, 5 Ser. Col. 675.

55. The rising was scheduled at eight in the night but deferred to accommodate last minute preparations.

or alive" to army headquarters "all Englishmen or white-skinned Anglo-Indians hostile to national aspirations." But the third and the main leaflet was a gorgeous declaration of the rebel cause and a passionate justification of their action. The H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch), "who claimed the allegiance of every Indian people," pledged their lives for "the freedom, welfare and exaltation" of the Motherland. They wanted to affirm ".... The right of ownership of India and the control of her destiny belong to the Indian people only and the long usurpation of that right by a foreign power and Government has not extinguished that right nor it ever can." To establish this the rebels were in readiness "to prove themselves worthy of the august destiny to which they are called."⁵⁶ Apart from few details the declaration ran on identical lines of the proclamation of Irish Republic, issued by the Easter rebels in 1916.⁵⁷ There is no doubt whatsoever that this leaflet reveals to the full the profound influence of Irish Easter Rising on the Chittagong outbreak. But did the watchwords of American Declaration of Independence not echo in France in 1789?

By midnight on 18 April, the administration in Chittagong was paralysed by systematic blows. The first attack, led by Ambika Chakravarti, was launched on the Central Telegraph and Telephone Office and resulted in its complete destruction. Assam Bengal Railway main line was uprooted in Nangalkot (76 miles from Chittagong) and in Dhoom (41 miles from Chittagong) leaving the town disconnected with the outside world except by wireless links from ships in the jetty. Soon attack on the police line followed under the leadership of Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Sinha, first and second in command of the operations, respectively. With the presence of 71 policemen⁵⁸ on the spot the group anti-

56. Leaflets issued by H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch) on 18 April 1930. Home Pole. File No. 4/9, 1931.

57. A comparison between this leaflet and the *Poblacht Nalle Eireann*, signed by Clarke, Macdiarmada, Pearse, Connolly, Macdonah, Cenant and read out by Pearse on 24 April 1916 before an indifferent small crowd in front of the G.P.O. Dublin, will adequately prove the point. The striking similarity in places is often verbatim.

58. This is the figure on Government record. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932. But Ananta Sinha in his book, *Agnigarva Chattagram*, p. 345 calculated the number of policemen to be 200.

icipated stiffest resistance there. But in practice the place was occupied with comparative ease along with its armoury full of revolvers, musketry and ammunitions. The attack on the European Club, led by Naresh Roy, was abortive as the club members—contrary to expectations—did not keep late hours on Good Friday night. Nirmal Sen and Lokenath Bal led the attack on A.F.I. Headquarters, ransacked the armoury and burnt it down. Here also the British sentries could offer no resistance. All parties thereafter collected at the Police line where Surjya Sen formally proclaimed a Republic at about 12 a.m. and inaugurated a Provisional Government in the midst of volley fires and the shouting of revolutionary slogans. The military achievement so far was impressive considering that only 71 men were employed with only 15 revolvers and breech loader guns, 17 grenades (not used) and some swords, daggers and iron bars. They killed altogether 7 men (including Sergeant Major Farrell, one sentry and one armed police constable) and inflicted injuries on some others. But behind the first flush of victory was lurking an ominous danger. The rebels counted far too much on the acquisition of Lewis guns or light machineguns from the A.F.I. armoury which was ingeniously broken open with the help of automobiles. They also anticipated ammunitions to be stacked in the armoury itself without knowing the fact that the magazine room, according to army arrangements, was invariably away from the armoury. When frantic searches could not produce ammunitions they—in despair—destroyed the Lewis guns and magazine rifles which seemed too burdensome and useless to carry. Thereafter the armoury was set on fire and—as it was found later—the magazine room “had providentially been completely overlooked by the raiders.”⁵⁹ When the group raiding A.F.I. armoury informed the main body at the Police line as to their failure to trace ammunitions the leaders naturally felt disheartened. They could no more hope to use Lewis guns to their advantage. They thereafter neglected to take care of two other Lewis guns in Pahartali and Double Mooring jetty about which they were aware all through.⁶⁰ Their monetary consola-

59. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

60. Interview with Ganesh Ghosh in Calcutta, dated 19 June 1971.

tion that the broken guns in A.F.I. headquarters would render the British helpless in the town was hardly justifiable till guns in other places remained intact. While the rebels wasted their chances of raiding Pahartali and Double Mooring jetty, the authorities—following an initial setback—remarkably recovered to wrest the initiative. The District Magistrate, Wilkinson, and Captain Taitt, Adjutant of Auxilliary Forces—who escaped death near A.F.I. armoury by inches—went to the railway station, commandeered an engine, reached Double Mooring jetty, despatched messages from a ship and brought the Lewis guns and men to A.F.I. armoury to make use of the spared magazine room. A party under the Superintendent of Police, Johnson, soon made a short excursion to the Police line—where the rebels were still in close command.⁶¹ Their Lewis gun attack was repulsed by the rebels with the newly acquired police musketry. In fact Johnson's party retreated following brisk firing and apprehending the danger of being overpowered. But unknowingly they did the damage as Surjya Sen's men were taken aback by this abrupt machine gun fire. The leaders felt most demoralised at the dim prospect of an unequal fight between musketry and machine guns. At this point they decided to destroy the Police armoury, guard-room and magazine room after acquiring for themselves as many arms as possible to carry. The contemporary criticisms that the rebels should have hidden such great quantity of arms—a dream of generations of Indian revolutionaries—was hardly justified. It was neither possible physically for 71 persons to carry 400 magazine rifles to any distant area nor practicable to search out a suitable hiding place. It is true that the original plan envisaged a distribution of arms to the people following the occupation of the town. But that part of the plan was rendered difficult when the rebels were unable to discover .303 bore cartridges (to be used for both magazine rifles and Lewis guns). Arms, in such circumstance, were more a liability than an asset. The .303 bore cartridges thus proved to be tragically crucial for the whole rising. But did the rebel leaders think that every thing would go in their way, according to their plan? Did they not make allowances for mistakes and exigencies?

61. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

While setting fire to the Police lines one of the insurgents (Mimangshu Sen) received severe burns. He was taken into a car in which Ananta Sinha and Ganesh Ghosh took their seats joined by two others (Ananda Gupta and Jiban Ghosal). The car left for the heart of the town, presumably to arrange for the injured person's treatment and transporting the ailing Ganesh Ghosh⁶² to Fairy hill. There was nothing wrong if an advanced party moved towards the point where the whole army planned to rally. But the unusual feature was the inclusion of two field-commanders in the advance party "without informing even Master da (Surjya Sen)" as one of their comrades put it later on.⁶³ However, Ganesh Ghosh distinctly remembers that Surjya Sen and others requested him to travel by car towards the town in view of his indisposition.⁶⁴ But Ananta Sinha was acting independently as he himself mentioned that he had no previous consultation with other leaders.⁶⁵ While in the town they expected the main body to arrive within a reasonable time. When it really did not do so the advanced party tried to meet them down half the way and even by returning to the Police line without any success.⁶⁶ This is certainly the correct description. But why did the main party wait for some time in the Police line for the return of the advanced group?⁶⁷ Was the advanced group under instruction to come back after dropping the injured to a secured place? There evidently was some confusion somewhere. However, the absence of two field-commanders, undoubtedly weakened the collective thinking of the leadership. When the whole party was waiting at the Police line under cover an automobile flashed its

62. On 18 April Ganesh Ghosh had symptoms of chicken pox and was running a fairly high temperature.

63. The version of Benode Choudhury, tape-recorded in Calcutta and acquired for Oral History Project, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library on 21 January 1971.

64. Interview with Ganesh Ghosh in Calcutta, dated 19 June 1971. The march towards Fairy hill and the gathering there were so unequivocal that Ganesh could never imagine at that time of any departure.

65. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-I, p. 151, Calcutta, 1968.

66. Interview with Ganesh Ghosh in Calcutta, dated 19 June 1971.

67. It was gathered, in fact, that the main body of rebels waited in the police line for approximately 20 minutes. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-i. p. 189, Calcutta.

light on them from a distance. The leaders already startled by Lewis gun fire—presumed it to be the signal for yet another machine gun onslaught. Ambika Chakravarti took an instinctive decision and promptly led a general retreat towards the neighbouring hills and jungles. Thus arose an incredible situation in which the victorious army left an unprotected town (the authorities meanwhile retired—following their abortive Lewis gun attack—to Pahartali European quarters, preparing for a limited defence and awaiting re-inforcement to arrive from Dacca) for hills without attempting to deploy men at strategic points. Their march to the hills was not a melee, no general *suave qui pent* as the rank and file remained “a compact and disciplined body”⁶⁸ without knowing, of course, what was happening. The over-all plan at this point was known only to Surjya Sen, Nirmal Sen and Ambika Chakravarti—who must have become thoroughly confused. Otherwise they had no business to tamper with an agreed plan and decide against rallying in the town. The H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch) had no preparation for roaming around the hills, no provision, water and compass (whereas food for 71 men was reserved in a restaurant in the town). Why did the three leaders particularly Surjya Sen, who was “head and shoulder above others in intelligence”⁶⁹ not realise that they were throwing the initiative which they so laboriously snatched? Surjya Sen and his men planned the aggression meticulously but not the consolidation. Tactically the whole rising almost ended at this juncture though the stage of heroism merely began.

Between 19 and 22 April the group moved about the hilly Chittagong tracts—roughly to 15 miles away from the town for nearly 85 hours. These were hours of extreme hardship when food and drinks were scarcely available and constant marching proved most exhausting. The run-away army hopelessly failed to establish contact with the town or with their lost comrades. Besides, the leaders must have, by this time, felt tormented by see-

68. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

69. Ganesh Ghosh always emphasized this point in his interview in Calcutta, dated 17 June 1971.

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ing the indomitable spirit of their rank. In fact a resentment among the followers was brewing up who insisted on attacking the town instead of moving around aimlessly.⁷⁰ They were obviously right, for the initiative—though lost—was not lost forever. On 21 April when the group was on a hill near Fatehabad a local news paper (*Daily Panchajanya*), secured by chance, conveyed the information about the arrival of British troops in Chittagong and the imposition of curfew in the town. It thus became an uphill task for the rebels to enter into an army-occupied town. Yet there was hardly any choice and they had to decide upon the attack of the town in four small batches. They actually marched for their destination from Fatehabad hill. But seeing the impossibility of reaching the town before dawn they preferred to take shelter for the day in Jalalabad hill and wait for the darkness of 22 April.⁷¹ Before it was dusk on 22 April they themselves were attacked by the British army and fought the battle of Jalalabad hill.

The battle of Jalalabad hill was a confrontation of unequals where the revolutionaries were particularly at a disadvantage. The hill was smaller in height than other surrounding hills, especially the one in front of it on the eastern side. The bushes and trees at the top offered only inadequate covers and the hill was dangerously close to a railway line. There was no supply of water and the rebels had no food for the whole day. Their number was 51 and the weapons consisted of police musketry and revolvers. They faced the regulars of British army carrying magazine rifles, Lewis guns and Vickers machine gun. The total number on the British side was overwhelmingly superior to insurrectionists' strength.⁷² Besides, the advantage of abrupt action lay,

70. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-1, pp. 199, and the version of Benode Choudhury (tape-recorded).

71. The version of Benode Choudhury, (tape-recorded).

72. No definitive British statement as to the number of Government troops is available. The British accounts (e.g. Report of Lt. Col. Dallas Smith, 24 April 1930, and Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case) are often contradictory and full of discrepancies. From these one could only deduce a very rough estimate. The British troops arrived near Jal-

unlike the night of 18 April, this time with the Government forces. However, the vigilant rebels were not as surprised as they should have been and thwarted all attempts of the British army to occupy the hill even when incessant machine gun fire was directed towards their position from the higher hill top on the eastern side. Soon thereafter the rebels faced Lewis gun attacks from their left and right flanks. But they maintained their persistent efforts to silence the enemy guns.⁷³ The engagement, commanded by Lokenath Bal, lasted from 5.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. bringing three hour full of glory to the insurrectionists. Their "united and determined attempt to annihilate" the British army forces⁷⁴ alarmed the authorities in Bengal. The British army hurriedly left the battlefield soon after the fall of darkness. officially on account of scant visibility and under orders to return to ensure the safety of the town at night⁷⁵ but practically

Jalalabad hill in various phases. First D.I.G. Mr. Farmer arrived in automobiles with one L.G. Section (roughly 10 men), 3 officers and 5 other men from Eastern Frontier Rifles. Then came Capt. Taitt in automobiles with a detachment of Surma Valley Light Horse Brigade (approximately 35 persons) and 31 men from Eastern Frontier Rifles. Receiving a message for reinforcement another group in automobile came under Lt. Francis with two sections (roughly 20 men) of Eastern Frontier Rifles. Finally came Lt. Col. Dallas Smith and A. S. P. Mr. Lewis with troops in an armoured train. There is no indication as to the number of train-load of troops, but it can not be less than one company (about 150 persons). This modest calculation makes a total of nearly 250 soldiers. Some more confusion is there as to the time of arrival of the armoured train near Jalalabad hill. Dallas Smith said in his report (Lt. Col. E. D. Dallas Smith, O.C. Special Duty, to Inspector General of Police, Bengal, No. 2, 24 April 1930, Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930) that it came at 7 p.m. when the battle was almost over. But the rebels categorically stated that the train came before the battle started. In fact its stoppage near the hill attracted their attention and enabled them to prepare for a fight. (The version of Benode Choudhury, (tape-recorded) and Sinha, Ananta *Chattgram Juba Bidroha*, part-1; p. 286).

73. Lokenath Bal's account, cited by Swami, Satyananda (pen name), *He Atit Katha Kao*, p. 239, Cal. 1969, and the version of Benode Choudhury, tape-recorded in Calcutta.

74. Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

75. Lt. Col. E. D. Dallas Smith, O.C. Special Duty Detachment to Inspector General of Police, Bengal, No. 2, dated 23 April 1930, Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

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under a gloom of defeat. The authorities searched for the main body of rebels for more than 48 hours. Why should the British force retire, after discovering them and engaging them, in a body instead of picketing the hill and wait for the next morning? The British army did return to Jalalabad hill in the morning of 23 April. But certainly they never expected the revolutionaries, squatting patiently at the hill top, to court arrest. The fact is that the British army failed in its objective and the rebels maintained unusual fire power. Fifty one persons hurled bullets, slogans and abuses in such fury that they appeared to be an army of at least hundred strong.⁷⁶ Often there were moments of glory on the death bed of Jalalabad hill, the dying men wishing comrades to fight to the last, passing over blood stained musket-ries and bidding bantering farewell to each other. The casualties on the rebel side were eleven dead and one mortally wounded (who eventually died).⁷⁷ As regards casualties on the British side the exact number can not be ascertained. According to the Government records the army suffered no casualty.⁷⁸ This is difficult to believe in view of the fact that the British officers employed their men several times to scale the hill and were forced to call them back when fired upon from a close range. It was a common sight for the rebels on Jalalabad hill to find British soldiers—who were hit—fall rolling down the slope.⁷⁹ The renowned historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar mentioned the casualty figure on the British side as 65 dead.⁸⁰ But this figure is based, however, on questionable evidence. Archival material is totally devoid of any direct mention of the number of casualties among the Government forces. This is not unusual as the

76. *Ibid.*

77. Harigopal Bal, Tripura Sen, Nirmal Lala, Pulin Ghosh, Sasanka Dutta, Madhusudan Dutta, Pravas Bal, Naresh Roy, Bindhu Bhattacharya, Jiten Dasgupta, Moti Kanugo Roy and Ardhendu Dastidar.

78. Lt. Col. E. D. Dallas Smith, O.C. Special Duty Detachment to Inspector General of Police, Bengal, No. 2, dated, 23 April 1930. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

79. The version of Benode Choudhury, tape-recorded in Calcutta.

80. While assaulting imprisoned prisoners Sir Charles Tegart was reported to have mentioned this figure. Majumdar, Dr. R. C., *History of Freedom Movement*, Vol. III, p. 499, Cal. 1963. Also, Dutt, Kalpana, *Reminiscences*, p. 7, Bombay, 1945.

knowledge of British loss would have been impairing to their reputation and inspiring to the population. The only remote evidence that the official documents offer is the reaction of the Director of Intelligence, Government of India in May 1932 when he learnt that none of the accused in the 1st Chittagong trial was to be executed. He was very upset at this leniency to those who were responsible for "12 murdered and unavenged policemen and soldiers."⁸¹ Throughout the Easter rising in Chittagong only two policemen (of which one died later on 7 May 1930) and two soldiers were known to have been killed in the hands of the rebels, apart from some civilians. The other eight could, therefore, be taken—at least tentatively—as soldiers who died in the action of Jalalabad hill.⁸² About the injured soldiers again no information is available. But one can not summarily dismiss Ananta Sinha's suggestion that Capt. Taitt's sudden departure from the scene of action with a part of his men at 7 p.m. and the unusual delay for the retreating British army finally to reach by train Chittagong town (covering 14 miles in nearly three hours) only point to the hurried arrangements for the injured and the dead in the Railway hospital.⁸³

The battle of Jalalabad hill was the climax of the Chittagong uprising. Surjya Sen, the leader, very truthfully and dispassionately, summed up the insurrectionary phase of his struggle in a few modest yet incisive sentences: "After six months of extensive preparation the Chittagong Revolution manifested itself on the night of 18 April 1930. On 22 April there was a fight for about 2½ hours with the British soldiers at Jalalabad hill and the British army was vanquished at last. . . . We sustained 12 casualties. After Jalalabad fight we came down and concealed ourselves."⁸⁴ The "concealment" of Surjya Sen and his men

81. H. Williamson, D.I.B. Government of India, note dated 4 May 1932. Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

82. Military records, not yet transferred to the National Archives of India, may in future throw further light on the subject.

83. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-1, p. 328. Capt. Taitt's withdrawal and the delayed train journey from Jalalabad hill are mentioned in Lt. Col. Dallas Smith's report and in the Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case.

84. Exhibit no. 189 (by Surjya Sen), Judgment of Special Tribunal in Chittagong on Surjya Sen and others, Home Pol. File No. 42/7, 1933.

and their subsequent activities till 1934 flowed towards a different direction and with entirely new promises. These naturally had no tactical resemblance to the Easter rising and thus should not be covered in this paper. However, we cannot but take into account the trail of Chittagong whirlwind till at least May 1930.

Soon after the battle of Jalalabad hill the detached group of rebels, including Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Sinha, confronted the police at Feni. Unable to establish contact with the main body they were proceeding towards Calcutta in utter confusion. Intercepted by the police at Feni railway station they managed to escape following a daring violent clash with the police. Though Ananta Sinha gave himself up soon to the police in Calcutta for abstruse emotional reasons,⁸⁵ others—joined lately by Lokenath Bal—remained free till they were overwhelmed in French Chandernagore on 1 September 1930 by a strong armed contingent under Calcutta Police Commissioner—Charles Tegart. When the group made an abortive attempt to break through the cordon Jiban Ghosal was shot dead. In Chittagong, meanwhile, on 24 April the police and the army spotted Amarendra Nandi—who was deputed by Surjya Sen, prior to the battle of Jalalabad hill, to get in touch with the detached group. Finding himself hopelessly surrounded Amarendra chose to kill himself rather than to surrender. But the suicidal freedom was most sensational in a poignant drama enacted at Kalarpole on 7 May 1930. While leaving Jalalabad hill Surjya Sen's army broke up into several small groups and took refuge in various shelters in the rural areas. One such group of six youngmen (Rajat Sen, Manoranjan Sen, Deva Prasad Gupta, Swadesh Roy, Fanindra Nandi and Subodh Choudhury) decided to leave their hide-out and proceed towards the town with the object of suddenly attacking the European club there⁸⁶. It may be recalled that the original plan of massacring Europeans on 18 April did not materialise. The group thus set before itself a task which remained unfulfilled during the rising. But the task was attempted rather irresponsibly, without much preparation and precaution as were necessary

85. Sinha, Ananta *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-II, pp. 151-59, Cal. 1963.

86. *Ibid*, p. 105.

in a military infested town. Surjya Sen, who was informed of this reckless adventure, was reported to have cautioned the group against dangers.⁸⁷ The only merit of this half-baked plot lay in the possibility of demoralising the administration through a snap guerilla action and its accompanying propaganda value. The authorities got the intelligence soon after the group arrived at the town on 6 May and there began a hunt for the rebels by the police under D.I.C.—Mr. Farmer, Eastern Frontier Rifles under Lt. Col. Dallas Smith and villagers under the instigation of police agents. There were clashes during the night-long chase in which the rebels killed a villager and a police constable and the police managed to hold two prisoners (Subodh and Fanindra). In the morning of 7 May the other four exhausted and injured youngmen were finally encircled by the military and the police in a jute crop field at Kalarpole, near Jhulda village. As the British soldiers crawled in close there was a brief but furious exchange of fire following which came a lull when the rebels were asked to surrender. This they refused to do and Manoranjan shouted back that he knew no surrender.⁸⁸ Then they excitedly pleaded with one another for the shooting of each by the other. It was done when consecutive revolver shots pierced the silence.⁸⁹ The soldiers coming near the dead bodies found Deva Prasad yet gasping for breath. Asked if he wanted to convey his last wish to the *Burra Sahab* he flickered before his death to express his regret at his inability "to kill Mr. Lowman."⁹⁰ Obviously he mistook Farmer for the Inspector General—Lowman.

The Chittagong rising, like the Irish Easter rising, was meant to be a heroic failure. The Irish Easter rebels, true to their own knowledge, suffered a military defeat but won—beyond their

87. Ghosh, Ganesh, "Surjya Sen (Masterda)" in *Surjya Sen Smriti*, p. 31.

88. Sinha, Ananta, *Chattagram Juba Bidroha*, part-II, p. 139.

89. According to the Civil Surgeon's report the four young-men injured by bullets of the British forces, "obviously" killed each other. J. C. Farmer, D.I.G. Bakharaganj Range, Chittagong to I.G. Calcutta, 10 May 1930. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

90. S. R. Johnson, S.P., Chittagong, to Lowman, I.G. Calcutta, No. 1001/44-30, 8 May 1930. Home Pol. File No. 335, 1930.

expectation—a complete political victory. The Irish nation, awakened by the gun fire, never looked back to Parliamentary irrelevance. The executions and imprisonments made all the difference in the political climate in favour of revolutionary Republicanism. The common men suddenly became aware of the dreams dreamed by Mac Donagh Macbride, Connolly and Pearse and their death.

“All changed, changed utterly
A terrible beauty is born.”

(“Easter, 1916”, Yeats)

The Chittagong rebels, on the contrary, fought favourably at Jalalabad hill and managed to retain their freedom. They averted a military defeat but arrested the political success. Their performance was more impressive than decisive. Their legacies were pricking memories and not “utter changes”.

“.... we have n't forgotten Dharmatala
I have no rest,
Chittagong always goads at my mind.”

(“Charam Partra,” Sukanta Bhattacharya)

They were proved to be heroes but not prophets.

“They are heroes
They used to raise storms in the heavens
Their stories still sound thrilling
Haloed by the blood of executed alien rulers
Guns, bullets and burst of bombs.”

(“Janatar Mukhe,” Sukanta Bhattacharya)⁹¹

But why was it so?

The Chittagong rebellion broke out at a time when the country was passing through a Civil Disobedience movement. The rising of the popular temper in stages, the Gandhian image of a Messiah

91. Sukanta, unlike Yeats, was not a contemporary of the rebels and he became a poet of the 1940's rather than the 1930's. But his esteem for the Chittagong heroes is clear from the letter he wrote to Bhupen Bhattacharya, 12 September 1946, *Sukanta Samagra*, pp. 356-57, Calcutta, 1969.

delivering goods to his people, his much-advertised prolonged Dandi march, the emergence of women as civil resisters, the epic struggle at Dharsana, the indomitable "Red Shirts" of Abdul Ghaffar Khan—created an electrifying situation throughout India. The Civil Disobedience was the more matured of the Gandhian movements drawing more people to its fold than was possible during the Non-Co-operation movement. Gandhi, who most unqualifiedly condemned the Chittagong Rising⁹² as Redmond did in the House of Commons (on 27 April 1916) in respect of the Irish rebels, was a political leader of his own kind with a distinct programme of mass movement—however controversial its characterisation might be. Surjya Sen and his men were challenging with their lives the form and content of Gandhian agitation condemning, as they revealed later, the politics of "emasculated non-violence"⁹³. It resembled in spirit the Irish revolutionists' challenge to Redmondian constitutionalism. But Redmond in Ireland could hardly match Gandhi in India as the rising in Chittagong was not comparable in extent to the rising in Ireland.⁹⁴ Besides, the Irish rebels struck when Redmond's position was dwindling but Surjya Sen's men attacked when Gandhi's fame was soaring. The timing of the Chittagong rising coinciding with a massive Gandhian movement was certainly disadvantageous. History takes note more of what had taken place than what would have taken place. But would the outcome have been the same if the Chittagong rising occurred a year later, between February and December 1931, the period when Gandhi was negotiating for entering into a pact with the Viceroy and then returning from England without any promise? Surjya Sen and his band, unfortunately, had no choice. They decided upon a plan, prepared for it and were all set for the action. Postponement would have revealed the plan leading to their wholesale arrest. They could not go back just as the Easter rebels refused to do on the swinging night of 23 April 1916. Consequently the impact of the Chittagong rising on

92. *Young India*, 24 April 1930.

93. Leaflet no. 1. issued by H.R.A. (Chittagong Branch) 26 September 1932. Home Pol. File No. 4/54, 1932.

94. More than a thousand people took part in the Easter Rising in Dublin. In Chittagong the number of participants was not even one hundred.

the people, in India and in Bengal, substantially diminished. In Bengal the Civil Disobedience movement and the Chittagong rising neutralised each other to a certain extent, keeping the temperature down in both violent and non-violent fronts. It is not altogether true that Bengal Congress' "poor response to the Civil Disobedience movement was drowned in the roar of the terrorist's gun" starting from Chittagong.⁹⁵ According to the Bengal Congress the number of arrested persons, between April and December 1930, was 13,000 and daily approximately 200 persons were arrested during the movement.⁹⁶ Even if one makes an allowance for partisan exaggeration it must be said that the number was considerable and only comparable to the U.P., where 10,000 people were arrested. It was, of course, not what could be expected of the most politically agitated and socially fluid province in India. The intensity of feeling—as seen perhaps in Gujarat—was definitely lacking in Bengal. The enthusiasm was not as intoxicating as of the Non-Co-operation (1920-22) days and the Government of Bengal, at least in 1930, were not altogether disturbed with the situation. In August 1930, they, in fact, discovered "a tendency to return to normalcy" and considered picketing as "sporadic and ill-organised."⁹⁷ This state of restrained or arrested political agitation in Bengal during the Civil Disobedience movement could only be explained by the recurring schism (between Bose and Sengupta) in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the revolutionary example set forth by the Chittagong rebels. In reality the disunity in the B.P.C.C. was probably of lesser consequence than the Chittagong rising as both Bose and Sengupta must have been keen to go to jail and they had more to gain than to lose in so doing—at least in the public eye. On the other hand Gandhi's revised opinion in December 1946 that the Chittagong

95. Chatterji, Bhola, *Some Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen Thirties*, p. 8.

96. Congress Review of Civil Disobedience Movement, a bulletin issued by the All India Congress Committee, January 1931. Mitra, N. N. (ed), *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1930.

97. The Government Review of Civil Disobedience Movement. Mitra, N.N. (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1930.

rebels were heroes whose bravery could not "infect others"⁹⁸ was merely a distinguished understatement. Otherwise, how could one explain the series of terroristic activities between 1930-35 in Bengal, the crowd of untried Bengali detenus in distant British prison camps—the political "untouchables" who could not be brought under Gandhi—Irwin Pact for release like the Congressmen, the virtual British military rule in Chittagong and the semi-military Government in the whole of Bengal? That the rising in Chittagong emulated the public, particularly the youth in Bengal, there is little doubt as the tales of Chittagong passed from one generation to another. The Bengali press which could have reflected this was already gagged by the Ordinance and the panicky English press circulated only censored news. The only newspaper, *Swadhinata*, which had the temerity to hail the rising on 22 April 1930, was promptly banned and prosecuted⁹⁹ on the same day—but not before three editions were exhausted by the over-enthusiastic buyers. The hardened revolutionaries in Bengal also felt proud and elated.¹⁰⁰ But the rising was—on the whole—not as inspiring as its authors envisaged and the message was not clear in the noise of Civil Disobedience movement. There is another point to ponder too,—the proceedings did not go according to the plan. Who can say what would have been the effect if Surjya Sen's army fought in Chittagong town before a populace than at Jalalabad hill before nobody? What would further have happened if Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch) suicide squad operated away from the obscure Chittagong, in the nerve centre of India—Calcutta? After all—the Irish rebels rose in Dublin and not in Kilkee or Kinsole.

But if the voice of Chittagong was not echoed throughout the nation it certainly had a deafening effect on the British authorities.

98. *Harijan*, 1 December 1946.

99. Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, who originally wrote the article—"Dhanya Chattagram", very kindly supplied the author with a copy.

100. A sample is the opinion of Bhupendra Kumar Dutta. He expressed this feeling of pride to the author during his stay in New Delhi in November 1971.

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The Hindustan Republican Army (Chittagong Branch) aimed at demoralising the British by a swift and dazzling aggression and in this they remarkably succeeded. The Government of Bengal grimly informed the Central authorities about the "considerable success" of the rising of 18 April¹⁰¹ and its impact on the young people of Chittagong, who were marvelled by Surjya Sen and "too glad to place themselves under such a hero."¹⁰² The Home Secretary of the Central Government, H. W. Emerson, was alarmed to find "a serious demoralisation of the official and non-official residents in Chittagong."¹⁰³ The Government of India reported to the Secretary of State for India that "Chittagong was in a bad shape morale is very low and initiative has been lost Government authority very weak. Vigorous action is necessary to bring the district in order."¹⁰⁴ The demoralisation could not have been more when the Commissioner, Chittagong Division and the District Magistrate reported to the Provincial Government "... the local civil authorities consider that the situation (in Chittagong) has passed beyond their control and that they cannot hold themselves responsible for the security of life and property in the district without the immediate introduction of martial law."¹⁰⁵ Thus Surjya Sen's men achieved, as far as the ruling authority was concerned, more than what they ever conceived.

If one searches for any softening of the Government attitude, any compromising trend in their policy as a result of the Chittagong rising he will be sorely disappointed. The armed struggle is not

101. R. N. Reid, Ch. Secy. Govt. of Bengal to Secy. Home Dept. Govt. of India, No. 1490, P.S.-D., 10 October 1931. Darjeeling. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

102. Note on the situation in Chittagong, *Ibid.*

103. Note by H. W. Emerson, Secy. Home Dept. Govt. of India dated 23 April 1931 on Bengal Government's letter no. 215-P.S.D. of 20 April 1931. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

104. Govt. of India to Secy. of State, Telegram No. 2712-S, 6 November 1931. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

105. Govt. of Bengal to Govt. of India, no. 215-PSD, 20 April 1931. Home Pol. File No. 291, 1931.

like a *Satyagraha* or parliamentary pressure to reach the conference table and effect suitable adjustments. It is a challenge of force for the state power, a fight to finish and in its process the conference table is at the end and not in the half-way. The existing authority who is challenged and who enjoys all the advantages of loyalties and organisation, also fights back, hits hard, crushes and oppresses the rebels and the people—from whom they emerge. So it finally involves the common men, who—when cowed down—retreats from an insurrection and—when defiant—spreads it. The Chittagong rebels also counted on the involvement of the people. Soon after their rise they apprehended retaliatory measures on the part of the Government and “a severe oppression of the people” which would commit the common men to sympathise and actively support the revolutionaries. This would turn the occasionally bomb-making secret societies into open revolutionary parties. They even visualised that in such a state of affairs the Government might be forced to think about a settlement as was the case in Ireland.¹⁰⁶ Their anticipations were not wholly wrong and at least an articulate middleclass section of the people were caught up in the whirlpool and suffered in Bengal. More than 1,000 youngmen from this section were languishing in jail by March 1931 and 3,374 persons were interned by May 1932.¹⁰⁷ Punitive exercises were resorted to against this section and collective fine was imposed on the community as a deterrent to the rebellious mood. Serious restrictions were put on the movements of the middle-class youth in Chittagong such as curfews and the carrying of identity cards.¹⁰⁸ The parents were warned and victimised and the population was always terrorised by the police and the army. Interrogations and tortures were practised beyond all limits. And in 1932 arrived in Bengal as Governor Sir John

106. Confession of Sahairam Das, 25 April, Judgment on 1st Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, Home Pol. File No. 7/4, 1932.

107. Bose, S.C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 216, and Mitra, N.N. (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, 1932, Vol. 2, p. 6.

108. “A Report on terrorist activities and Government action in Chittagong, 9 March 1932 to 31 March 1933” by S. Handoo Dist. Magistrate, Chittagong, 13 April 1933. Home Pol. File No. 45/7, 1933.

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Anderson, experienced in counter-insurgency in Ireland, with contingents of British infantry to tackle a rebel Bengal. But the educated middle class section—away from the vast majority of the society—was always susceptible to be terrorised by the authorities. And there came the test of the insurrectionists, not of their valour but of their ideology. Unfortunately the Chittagong rebels were yet to discover a scientific ideology which would appeal to all classes of people and draw them close. The rebels had not much to offer, except patriotism, to sustain the morale of "Heroic Chittagong" "untrammelled" by attacks.¹⁰⁹ A simple sentimental nationalist revolt—without the advantage of a revolutionary ideology—has always an element of gamble in it. In 1916 in Ireland it paid rich dividends and in 1930 in Chittagong it did not.

Now, what position will history ascribe to the Chittagong rebellion? The Easter rising in Chittagong was organised by a group of romantic revolutionists whose faith in armed struggle was not understood by the vast majority of their countrymen and whose ardent patriotism could not make amends for the lack of revolutionary ideology. But on the whole the buoyant Chittagong heroes achieved what generations of Indian militants always aspired for. They, for the first time, broke the monotony of abortive conspiracies, stereotyped robberies and ineffectual assassination of individuals. In the context of nationalist India their's was the unique example of an organised military campaign against the mighty British Government. Objectively, the Chittagong rebels—the extremists among the Indian petty bourgeois—showed the way for the highest form of anti-colonial struggle, namely, an armed confrontation, irrespective of their prejudices and fantasies, weaknesses and errors. They left behind a model which could have been suitably adopted by those who were concerned about an anti-imperialist social revolution in India throughout the 1930's. The doctrinaire Indian socialists and communists, shocked at the sight of high adventurism in Chittagong, forgot that the talk of perfect social revolution was invariably utopian and that the armed struggle against

109.. "Chattagram: 1943" by Sukanta Bhattacharya, *Sukanta Samagra*, p. 60, Cal. 1969.

an established authority is always perilous. They, who theoretically opposed all sorts of national oppressions, thus ignored "the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against their oppressors."¹¹⁰

110. "The Irish Rebellion of 1916", Lenin, V.I., *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX (1916-17), pp. 303-4, London, 1942.

The Continuity of Constitutionalism in The Indian Nationalist Movement

M. P. SREEKUMARAN NAIR

It is a truism that historical writing tends to reflect the age in which it is produced. A historian attempting to analyse an event or movement oftentimes cannot avoid making personal evaluations or clothing his thoughts in the distinctive modes of expression of his own age. This is very largely true of a major part of the writing on the history of the nationalist movement. Thus although the history of India's struggle for freedom is, in a very real sense, one of continuity and change, our post-Independence perspective tends to overweigh the element of change while underestimating the influence of continuity. By over-emphasising the role of particular changes, it is often forgotten that no man or group of men can either completely alter an existing system or, conversely, prevent change indefinitely. Much of the distorted view of history of our struggle for freedom has emanated from ultra-nationalist writers who fail to comprehend this truth. This would explain the considerable under-rating or devaluation of the role of constitutionalism in the Indian struggle for freedom. The history of the freedom movement, in terms of techniques of action, stands in need of revision.

The fabric of the Indian nationalist movement, despite infinite gradations of shade and colour, was on the whole made up of two dominant, dissimilar patterns: constitutionalism and militant nationalism (including both violent and non-violent varieties). The ideology and techniques of both the constitutionalist and the revolutionary schools were reflected in the struggle for freedom which, in the main, was directed by the Indian National Congress during 1885-1947. This paper is concerned with the influence of the constitutionalist school on the nature of the Indian freedom struggle. While recognising the important part played by revolutionary techniques, it seeks to show that constitutionalism had the predominant influence and provided the basic element of continuity in India's struggle for freedom.

The goal of the constitutionalists was the establishment in India of a liberalistic parliamentary state, modelled closely on the system of government prevailing in Great Britain, but adapted to Indian circumstances.¹ The constitutionalist school stood for the acceptance of what was best in the civilisation of the west. They were therefore opposed to the militant nationalist school which wanted to sever India's connection with Britain and create a government based on traditional lines.² They did not aim at the 'narrower ideal' of complete independence, but stood for the 'more desirable' goal of realising parliamentary self-government within the British Commonwealth.³ This is clearly borne out from the political work and numerous statements of leading constitutionalists like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjea, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and others. It would not be very wide of the mark if it is said that they placed Democracy before Independence; in other words they believed in the evolution of democracy resulting in the evolution of freedom.

More importantly, the constitutionalist school hoped that by *constitutional agitation* it would be possible to put pressure on the British government to concede responsible government to India. Constitutionalism was a technique of struggle which fully utilised the machinery created or recognised by the state for the ventilation of grievances. As defined by Gokhale, the leading advocate of this school of thought, it was agitation by methods which the Indians were 'entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constituted authorities'.⁴ It was therefore opposed to mass direct action involving open and violent or even non-violent defiance of the legally-constituted government. The revolutionary nationalists sought to achieve Indian independence by overthrowing the government, while the constitution-

1. This was the first article of the Congress Constitution adopted in 1908 and continued until 1920.

2. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj* (selected writings) (Calcutta, 1954), pp. 166 and 200. Aurobindo Ghose, *Introductory Appreciation to Bal Gangadhar Tilak. His Writings and Speeches* (Madras, 1922), p. 15. Mahatma Gandhi, *Harijan* 24 May 1942.

3. Presidential Address of C. R. Das at the Bengal Provincial Conference, 1925, as given in H. Das Gupta, *Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das* (Delhi, 1960), pp. 209 and 211.

4. *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Madras, 1920), p. 950.

nalists aimed at the reform of the existing system which, they felt, would also produce the same result, namely, the independence of the Indian people.

The task of defining the role of constitutionalism in the Indian struggle is not an easy one. The constitutionalists were no less sincere than the revolutionary nationalists in their desire for Indian independence. Both schools of nationalism were led by practical men who had a clear idea of what was possible and what was not possible. It was chiefly in the techniques of action and in the nature of the system of the government that was projected as the ideal that they differed. In general, the constitutionalists were wedded to a programme of peaceful agitation ranging from petitions and appeals to passive resistance including non-payment of taxes. The appropriate constitutional method in a given conflict-situation was to be selected on grounds of practicability and expediency. Thus, while boycotts, strikes, etc., were sometimes considered expedient for the redress of specific grievances, their employment as normal weapons in the struggle for freedom and responsible government was always opposed by the constitutionalists. The normal methods adopted by the constitutionalists were putting up candidates for elections to the legislatures and carrying on the struggle through the legislatures. All available agencies which were in a position to exert influence or pressure on the government were to be used to further the cause of Indian independence. Thus the constitutionalists wanted to enter the local bodies, legislatures, and even the higher position in the bureaucracy and the judiciary. This method of struggle certainly involved a measure of cooperation with the British authorities. But it is important to remember that cooperation was urged as a technique of struggle and not as a blind or servile policy. In its essence, it was responsive cooperation which aimed at consolidating the available political power and using that power to fight for more. The idea was to effect a gradual transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The constitutionalists were not opposed to the institutions created by the British, such as legislatures, a more or less independent judiciary, local self-governing bodies and a neutral civil service. They wanted to reform these institutions in such a way that they would be responsible to an Indian parliament, rather

than to British Parliament. In short, the constitutionalists wanted to acquire political power through the normal constitutional machinery with a view to evolving the governmental structure more or less on British lines.

Constitutionalism remained the declared method of the political struggle of the Congress until 1920. Its achievements during this period are too well-known to need enumeration here.⁵ To be sure, they were not spectacular in the ordinary sense, because the constitutionalists were engaged in the fundamental task of providing the bases of a political life and protecting the infant Congress from the wrath of the government and the bureaucracy. It is also true that the early Congress was elitist in outlook and had no grounding in the masses. This was but natural and inevitable in the circumstances under which that organisation was started and had to function. To say, as has been done even in professional writings, that they were liberals, not nationalists, that their liberalism was derived from a 'superficial study of British history' and an intense admiration for 'British institutions', and that to them India's past was 'blank' and 'bleak' is certainly unhistorical and un-academic.⁶ To condemn them would be like blaming 'the brick mortar that is buried six feet deep in the foundation and plinth of a modern edifice'.⁷ The orthodox view that regards constitutionalism as 'political mendicancy' will be seen uncharitable when it is remembered that inside the context of their long-term aims and the new social and economic forces they released, the constitutionalists were statesman-like and revolutionary.⁸

The apparent failure of constitutionalism to prevent government from unpopular measures like the partition of Bengal (1905) led to the emergence of militant nationalism. The political extre-

5. For this see C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, (Allahabad, 1947); A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution* (Madras, 1917); R. G. Pradhan, *India's Struggle for Swaraj* (Madras, 1930); and G. N. Singh, *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development* (Vol. I, Delhi, 1969, 4th edn).

6. See, for instance, Saggi, ed., *Life and Work of Lal, Bal and Pal* (New Delhi, 1962), p. 18.

7. Patabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* (Bombay, 1946) I, p. 61.

8. See K. M. Panikkar, *The Foundations of New India* (London, 1965), Chapter VI.

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mism of the Lal-Pal-Bal School certainly gave an unprecedented impetus to Indian nationalism especially on its psychological side and carried the message of the struggle to the masses. The pattern of agitation against the partition of Bengal anticipated what was to come later on a national scale under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. On this issue the Congress split at Surat (1907) and the extremists for a time remained outside the organisation. However, it is important to note that when they returned to the Congress in 1916, they were prepared to follow a constitutionalist programme. The foremost extremist, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in the post-Mandalay period of his career, was a convert to constitutionalism.⁹ His very popular Home Rule movement was constitutionalist in objectives and methods. When the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms became law, Tilak offered the Crown 'responsive cooperation' which meant only a re-statement of the familiar method of his political adversary, Gokhale. After the Amritsar Congress (Dec. 1919) and until his death seven months later, Tilak was busy organising the Democratic Party within the Congress with the aim of working the reforms for what they were worth.¹⁰ Thus despite the penetration of extremism and even after the exit of many constitutionalists who formed the National Liberal Federation of India, the Congress as a political organisation remained largely wedded to the technique of constitutionalism.

When Mahatma Gandhi came to dominate the Congress in the 1920's the Congress officially abandoned constitutionalism. In accordance with this, the Nagpur session (Dec., 1920) changed the constitution of the Congress and declared the 'creed' of the Congress to be 'the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means' (as distinct from constitutional means).¹¹ Gandhi's political ideas were in many respects opposed to those of the constitutionalists. His concept of Swaraj was idealistic and traditional, and his technique of satyagraha was non-violent mass struggle. Gandhian concepts were rooted in deep spiritual and moral idealism and rested upon the complete identification of private and public virtues; on the operational front his political methods were non-consitu-

9. See my paper "Tilak: Revolutionary or Constitutionalist?", in *Kesari-Mahratta Annual* (Tilak Special, Aug. 1970).

10. Sitaramayya, op. cit. p. 178 and p. 195.

11. Report of the 35th Indian National Congress, 1920, p. 46.

tional, at times even anarchical. Gandhi preached the boycott of the legislatures, courts of law and government-aided educational institutions; non-payment of taxes; and civil disobedience with the declared object of ending the British rule.¹² He did not want a reform of the existing system but a thorough revolution, albeit on non-violent lines. Nevertheless, what is significant is that, despite the declared commitment to the Gandhian programme, the Congress switched back to constitutionalism several times in the course of the struggle since 1920. The fact has generally been ignored that though the counsels of the Congress were dominated by Gandhi, there was always a strong element attached to the principles of constitutionalism. At all crucial stages of the struggle this element so asserted itself as to give the policy of the Congress constructive and practical turn, thus avoiding absolute recourse to the techniques of mass struggle and the dangers attendant upon it.

In the nature of things, the Gandhian technique of the struggle could neither remain within its strict confines nor produce tangible success except that of producing an atmosphere of tension and excitement. One after another the various items in the Gandhian programme failed to attain the measure of success vouchsafed by Gandhi. The *annus mirabilis* (1920-1) passed without the promise of immediate Swaraj redeemed. Disillusionment with the Gandhian political methods was acknowledged by the Congress Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee which, in a moment of despair, stated: 'Theories and dogmas are all very well in their own way, but they will not carry you far if you ride them to death'.¹³ Congressmen like C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru accepted the self-reliance part of the Gandhian techniques and were prepared to work his Constructive Programme in its entirety. But their practical approach to politics was opposed to accepting everything that had been advocated in the name of non-cooperation. They stated:

.... if non-cooperation is more a matter of mental attitude than the application of a living principle to the existing facts of national life with special reference to the varying attitudes of the bureaucratic government which rules that life, we conceive it to be our duty to sacrifice even non-cooperation to serve the real interests of the country.¹⁴

12. *Ibid.* p. 202-3, 226.

13. Quoted in Chintamani, *op. cit.* p. 144.

14. Motilal Nehru, *Voice of Freedom* (Selected speeches ed. by K. M. Panikkar and A. Pershad) (Bombay, 1961), p. 519.

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This attitude lay behind the formation of the Swarajist party which functioned as the legislative wing of the Congress during 1924-30. The published programme of the party was 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction within the Councils'; but in actual practice it was largely cooperation where possible and opposition when necessary.¹⁵ In other words they toed a line akin to that chalked out earlier by Gokhale or latter-day Tilak, though altered circumstances invested their demands with greater definiteness and insistence. Their methods of obstruction like refusal of supplies, throwing out of budgets, non-acceptance of office and walk-out were sanctioned by the practice of democratic countries and were constitutional and parliamentary. The Swarajists were thus a party of opposition, using the legal right granted under the Reforms Act to prove the unworkability of Dyarchy and to bring the maximum constitutional pressure to bear upon the government to grant responsible government and at the same time prepared to cooperate with government without compromising national interests. Swarajist constitutionalism demonstrably proved the capacity of the Indians to adopt and utilise parliamentary methods and institutions, and it constitutes a memorable chapter in the evolution of the Indian Parliament.

Swarajist constitutionalism suffered a set-back in the tense political situation which followed the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927. The Congress, in the years immediately preceding the Second Round Table Conference and succeeding it, abandoned constitutionism and again strayed into the path of civil disobedience. It was, however, inevitable the civil disobedience movements, though begun amidst excitement and enthusiasm should almost invariably end in anticlimax. Thus, though there was no specific immediate cause for withdrawal as in 1922, the civil disobedience campaign begun in January 1932 was partially suspended in May 1933 and finally called off in May 1934 by the All-India Congress Committee at the instance of Gandhi.¹⁶ Even while the campaign was in progress the wisdom of boycotting the legislatures

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 506 and 520.

16. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, pp. 558-60, 568-71

was called in question by many leading Congressmen.¹⁷ The situation very much resembled that of 1922; but a Swarajist revolt was averted because in 1934 Gandhi himself advocated council-entry.¹⁸ Accordingly in the beginning of 1935 Congressmen contested the elections and entered the Central Legislature.

When the Government of India Act, 1935, was passed, the initial reaction of the Congress was to reject the new constitution as a whole. Jawaharlal Nehru exhorted the nation to put an end to the Act and have a clean slate to write afresh.¹⁹ The Congress declared that the constitution acceptable to it must be 'based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a Constituent Assembly'.²⁰ The repudiation of the Act was thus more complete and categorical than the repudiation of the Act of 1919 by the Congress. But while the inauguration of the Montford constitution found the Congress in the negative attitude of non-cooperation and direct action, that of the new constitution was to see the Congress on the positive path of constitutionalism. For, when the Act of 1935 came up for discussion in the Congress sessions and committees it was found that though there was substantial unanimity of opinion over its rejection, there was sharp cleavage as to the mode of rejection.²¹ While a minority (mostly socialists) favoured a programme of mass struggle and direct action including boycott of legislatures, the majority felt that, after all, the reforms were not going to be abrogated or withdrawn just because the Congress had rejected them, as was clear from the history of the previous constitutional enactments. If the Congress boycotted the elections it meant missing an opportunity afforded by the election campaign to educate the masses on the basic issues of the political problem and, moreover, less desirable elements would capture the councils and speak in the name of the Indian people.²² Vallabhai Patel represented

17. Subhas Bose, *The Indian Struggle* (London, 1935), pp. 193-4; Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography* (Bombay, 1957), p. 378.

18. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.* p. 581.

19. *Indian Annual Register* (hereafter cited I.A.R.) Calcutta, 1936 II, p. 225.

20. Congress election manifesto, 1936, given in Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India* (London, 1948), Appendix A, p. 402.

21. Rajendra Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

22. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Calcutta, 1959), p. 13.

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majority view when he stated that 'all of us want to destroy the imposed constitution. How to destroy it from within the legislatures is the question'.²³ There was also an influential section which felt that the provincial part of the Act should be accepted and worked. It is important to note that those who strongly urged the contesting of elections in 1936 and entering government in 1937—Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari—were the 'no-changers' of 1921. This is a clear evidence of the reassertion of the practical policy of constitutionalism within the Congress. On this ground it is also permissible to hold that if the federal part of the Act of 1935 had been implemented by the Viceroy, the Congress, following up its constitutionalist policy would have worked it with the aim of exposing its shortcomings and transforming it into a true federation.²⁴

In October–November 1939 the Congress withdrew from the provincial governments on extraneous, rather than constitutional, grounds. It was followed by the rejection of the British government's constitutional proposals during the war. In December 1939 the Working Committee enjoined upon the Congress members of the central legislature to continue the boycott indefinitely.²⁵ In October 1940 Mahatma Gandhi started a programme of 'moral' and 'symbolic' protest against British policy in the form of individual civil disobedience.²⁶ Finally from August 1942 to May 1944 there took place what has been known to history as the Quit India Movement—the last in the series of the Congress satyagraha campaigns for freedom. To the extent that these took place, it must be conceded that the Congress moved away from the path of constitutionalism. But it is too much to hold, as Congress chronicles and accounts have done, that the Indian struggle in its last stages was won by the Gandhian technique of non-violent direct action. Congress policy from 1939 shows that the abandonment of constitutional methods was neither complete nor wholehearted.

23. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 32.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 109, 117–21; K. M. Munshi, *The Changing Shape of Indian Politics* (Poona, 1946) p. VI; C. Rajagopalachari, *Reconciliation, Why and How* (Bombay, 1945), p. 31.

25. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 160.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 219; I.A.R., 1940, II, p. 222

The resignation of the provincial ministries was not followed up by absolute withdrawal from or boycott of the legislative council. In the instructions of the Congress Parliamentary Subcommittee it was specifically stated that 'Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries are the only persons expected to resign', and that 'Speakers and Deputy Speakers and members of the Assemblies, Presidents and members of the Councils are expected to retain their offices and seats'.²⁷ As regards the Central Assembly, though the Congress members were asked to boycott the proceedings, they were allowed to attend for the purpose of retaining their seats.²⁸ Moreover, in November 1940 the prohibition of participation in proceedings was waived in order to enable the members to throwout the Finance Bill relating to the war and thus show that India was not with the government in the war effort.²⁹ The value of a constitutional protest through legislative action was thus vindicated by the Congress policy. In no case was resignation of membership of legislatures insisted and this is specially significant in view of the fact that the term of the central and provincial legislatures was extended year by year until the termination of the war, despite the demand of the Congress for fresh elections. It seems from this that the Congress was hopeful of a settlement with Britain during the war years, and membership of the legislatures was retained in order to facilitate normal legislative activity in case a settlement was effected. Thus unlike in 1921 or 1930 non-cooperation was not pushed to the extent of boycotting legislatures completely.

The influence of constitutionalism on Congress policy during the war years could be seen most clearly in the specific demand for a provisional national government first put forward by the Congress leadership in July 1940. The moving spirit behind this was C. Rajagopalachari who, since the outbreak of the war, had been unceasing in his efforts to bring about an understanding between the Congress and the government. He and other constitutionally-minded Congressmen were not fully reconciled to the Gandhian idea of applying the principle of non-violence to the

27. *I.A.R.*, 1939, II, p. 237.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

29. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 222.

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war situation and of withdrawing from government as a programme of political action.³⁰ The resolution passed by the Working Committee meeting at Delhi on 7 July 1940 reflects an attempt on their part to wean the Congress away from the methods of mass struggle with all its attendant uncertainties and dangers.³¹ Closely analysed, the resolution did not contemplate any revolutionary change. In the first place it demanded not immediate independence but only a declaration acknowledging it soon after the war. Secondly, as an earnest of the British promise it asked for the establishment of a provisional national government functioning under the terms of the existing constitution. No fresh legislation by Parliament was envisaged at that stage. Within the legal framework then existing, it was proposed that a national government be formed by the Governor-General.³² The resolution thus aimed at responsible government through a *de facto* transformation of the existing system. The resolution committed the Congress to a programme of conditional or responsive cooperation. The Congress, no doubt, was destined to embark on a programme of mass struggle in the years following. But the basic approach of a provisional national government was never abandoned and it appeared prominently in all the negotiations that passed between the Congress and the government subsequently.

The feebleness of the 'individual' Satyagraha campaigns that followed the Congress rejection of the 'August offer' and the deepening war crisis aroused in the Congress ranks a new note of cooperation. The Working Committee's Bardoli resolution (December 1941) on the war situation and its acceptance of Gandhi's resignation prepared the ground for a revival of the demand for establishing a provisional national government within the existing constitution.³³ In view of the British government's rejection of the earlier demand for a provisional government the Congress, of course, did not state the demand in formal documents. But the tone of the Congress resolutions and the statements of

30. I.A.R., 1940, II, p. 194; V. P. Menon, *Transfer of power in India* (Calcutta, 1957) p. 92.

31. I.A.R., 1940, II, p. 176.

32. J. Nehru, *Discovery of India* (Calcutta, 1946) p. 528.

33. *Ibid.*, 534 and 546; Bhatramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

many Congressmen during the anxious days that followed Pearl Harbour did not leave any doubt that the Congress would be agreeable to any workable settlement based on a provisional national government.

This was fully revealed from the Congress approach to the Cripps' Proposals (March 1942). The discussions between the Congress leaders and Cripps centred not on the long-term proposals but on the interim proposals with special emphasis on the position of defence and the powers of the provisional government.³⁴ The negotiations finally broke down on the question of the provisional national government, but even here the difference between the stand-points of Cripps and the Congress was not unbridgeable. Cripps discountenanced constitutional changes during the pendency of war and until the drafting of a new constitution by the Indians themselves. The Congress realised that legal changes would take time and did not press for them. The Congress approach in 1942 was the same as in 1937. It was willing to work within the existing constitution; it did not insist on a *de jure* transfer of power during the war, but aimed transformation of the Executive Council by informal agreement, by convention, into a *de facto* cabinet.³⁵ It was unfortunate that this suggestion was not properly appreciated by Cripps. The situation could have been saved and a settlement arrived at if the Viceroy or Cripps had said something similar to what was said by Lord Linlithgow on behalf of the governors in 1937 before the Congress assumed office. Probably there was no proper understanding between Cripps and the Viceroy, and between Cripps and other members of the British cabinet.³⁶ Cripps' sudden departure, in spite of President Roosevelt's efforts to prolong his stay, brought an abrupt end to the negotiations.³⁷ What is however noteworthy in all this is that the Congress approach to the Cripps' offer was not the approach of non-co-

34. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

36. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Colin Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps* (London, 1957), p. 291.

37. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War Vol. IV The Hinge of Fate* (London, 1951), p. 193; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York, 1950) II, pp. 108-9.

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operation. It was an attempt to win freedom through the existing constitution and without resort to revolutionary changes. The voting in the Working Committee (2 April 1942) on the resolution on the Cripps's offer showed that a substantial section of the Congress High Command was in favour of accepting the proposals.

In the gloom that prevailed over the political horizon following the failure of the Cripps' Mission, the revolutionary gospel of Gandhi as contained in the so-called Quit India resolution was only too apt to appeal to the Congress leadership. This was a rebuff to Congress constitutionalists like C. Rajagopalachari. For them the dominant concern was the establishment of a provisional government which would resist Japanese aggression and facilitate the *de facto* transfer of power. The Quit India resolution by contemplating a struggle on the lines of non-cooperation, implied that the government could operate in a constitutional vacuum without legal authority. This was totally unacceptable to Rajagopalachari and his school.³⁸ According to them the formation of a provisional government was possible only if the continuity of the state was assured. But Gandhi had already committed himself to a programme of mass struggle, and his personality triumphed over the rationalism of Rajagopalachari and the initial opposition of Nehru and Azad.³⁹

The Quit India movement was by and large a failure. It was ill-timed and the swift action of the government left it ill-organised and leaderless⁴⁰ Mahatma Gandhi might have hoped that the British government would be willing to negotiate, as was the case in 1921 and 1930, and he still clung to the belief that a settlement with Britain possible.⁴¹ But his assumptions proved

38. Letter to Gandhi, signed by C. Rajagopalachari, K. Santhanam, T. S. S. Rajan, Ramanathan, 18 July 1942—See Nicholas Mansergh, ed, *Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs 1931-1952* (London, 1953) II, p. 635.

39. Nehru and Azad consented to risk a revolt in the midst of War out of an anxiety to check the sullen passivity of the people.—See *Gandhi's Correspondence with Government*, (Ahmedabad, 1945), p. 252.

40. Nehru, *op. cit.*, p. 575.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 576.

wrong. The government moved, but it was in the direction of repression. When the movement subsided and Gandhi was released in May 1944, the attitude of the government had little changed from that in 1939 or 1942.

The Quit India movement was the last attempt made by the Congress to gain freedom through non-constitutional means. Its failure brought Gandhi and the Congress to a perception of the realities and led them to the adoption of constitutional means of struggle. Thus soon after his release Gandhi took up a position which was unacceptable to him at the time of the Cripps' Mission in 1942. He declared that, in view of the altered conditions, mass civil disobedience envisaged by the Congress resolution of August 1942 could not be offered; that the political situation had to be reviewed *de novo* and that at the time he would be satisfied with a national government in full control of the national administration.⁴² If such a national government were formed he would advise the Congress to participate in it. The change revealed by these statements soon found a corresponding change in Congress policy. Thus when the Central Legislature met in November 1944, the Congress party attended it, though it is recorded that the Congress Assembly Party had taken the decision without specific authority from the Congress.⁴³ In March 1945, Dr. Khan Sahib, leader of the Congress party in the legislative assembly of the North West Frontier Province, accepted the premiership of that province with the consent of Gandhi.⁴⁴ This was a landmark in the reversal of policy on the part of the Congress. In November 1939, the Congress had withdrawn from the government on the question of India's participation in the war. Now, in spite of the war, the Congress entered the government, though only in one province, and it was tacitly accepted that the Congress ministry would carry on the prosecution of the war. Six years of war had led Congressmen to accept what was unacceptable in 1939.

42. I.A.R., 1944, II, p. 182; D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (Bombay, 1953), VI, p. 318.

43. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, II, p. 641.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 531.

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The influence of constitutionalism on Congress policy is further evidenced at the Simla Conference held in June-July 1945. The Conference was convened on the initiative of Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, not to make far-reaching constitutional changes or a final settlement but to break the political deadlock by securing the consent of principal Indian parties to an interim government. The Wavell Plan suggesting replacement of the existing Executive Council with a Council more representative of Indian political opinion was in effect only a re-statement of the short-term proposals of the Cripps' offer. Yet the Congress accepted it generally.⁴⁵ The Congress approach was more or less on the lines chalked out by Rajagopalachari as early as July 1940. It was, further, precisely the same as was rejected by the Congress since 1942. The Congress acceptance of the Wavell offer meant that for the interim it was willing to work within the framework of the Government of India Act of 1919 and 1935, and to revert to the normal constitutional governments in the provinces, as existed before the resignation of the provincial ministries.

From the nature of the Congress participation in the Simla Conference it may be said that the purely political struggle of the Congress to wrest power from Britain was almost over. The Simla Conference (and, later, the Cabinet Mission proposals) failed not on the basic political issue between India and Britain, but on the communal issue dividing different Indian groups. The Congress struggle was now directed more against internal forces, against Muslim communalism as embodied in the demand for Pakistan; towards British government the policy of the Congress was one of constitutional cooperation.

For purposes of this paper, the political developments in India between April 1946 and August 1947 are relevant only in showing how the Congress policy facilitated the final transfer of power by agreement in a constitutional way rather than by revolution, violent or non-violent. Thus when the Cabinet Mission proposed their plan of constitutional settlement in May-June 1946 the Congress, while critical of its defects, did not reject it. On the contrary the Congress adopted the scheme in its entirety by August

45. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 112; I.A.R., 1945, I, p.74.

1946.⁴⁶ Following this it participated in the elections to the constituent Assembly; and on the invitation of Lord Wavell, Pandit Nehru formed the interim government on 2 September 1946. Finally the acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan (June, 1947)—which meant acceptance of Dominion Status and the Government of India Act of 1935 both of which the Congress had officially denounced—clearly shows that the transfer of power was carried through without any break in legal and constitutional continuity; and that, moreover, it was effected 'with a measure of goodwill on both sides and not in conflict or bitterness'.⁴⁷ It would have been possible for the Congress to repudiate the steps taken by the British government to effect the final transfer of power and to resort to direct action for wresting power. But faced with the intractability of the Muslim League on the one hand and the conciliatory attitude of the Labour government on the other, the majority of the Congress leadership including Gandhi regarded such a course as ill-advised. The Congress policy on the eve of independence was definitely constitutionalist and characterised by positive programme of cooperation with the government. It was a policy which sought to conserve the unity of the country as had developed under the British rule and transform the existing government into one responsible to an elected legislature.

The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that constitutionalism was the technique of political struggle not merely during 1885-1921; it continued to influence the policy and programme of the Congress even in the Gandhian era. The Congress accepted the Gandhian techniques only partly. The role played by militant nationalism including Gandhism in the freedom struggle was mainly in building up the Congress organisation and in preparing the psychological climate which made continuance of foreign rule impossible rather than in effecting the final transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The resort to constitutionalism provided the underlying element of continuity in the freedom struggle and helped the peaceful withdrawal of Britain and the establishment of a parliamentary state in India.

46. *Ibid.* pp. 157-8.

47. E. W. R. Lumby, *Transfer of Power in India* (London, 1954), p. 261.

Marudu Pandyan The Hero of the Rebellion of 1800-1801

BY

K. RAJAYYAN

Marudu Pāṇḍyan (also called Chinna Marudu), the hero of the South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801, was a man of dark complexion, handsome personality and affable manners. Born in obscurity, he started his career as betel bearer in the service of Rajah Udaya Tēvar of Śivagaṅga. In 1772 the ruler was killed and the state was occupied by the combined forces of the English Company and the Carnatic Nawab. The genius of young Marudu first manifested itself in 1780, when he organised a popular movement, expelled the intruders and proclaimed as the ruler of Śivagaṅga Vellāchi, the daughter of the fallen prince. Appointed as minister in the new regime, he grew in popularity in the service of his people. So affectionately adored, he commanded vast influence over the masses. He resided in an open, yet unguarded house at Śiruwayal and whoever wanted to see him had a free access to his presence.¹

Hurt by private grievances, Bahādur Shāh, Nāna Sāhib, Rāṇi of Jhānsi and Kuṇwār Singh drifted themselves into the Great Revolt of 1857 against the English. Kaṭṭabomman was not so rash a rebel, as he is depicted, for he did pay the tribute to the Company so as to excite no suspicion and proceeded to organise the poligar rebellion. However the alienation of the inhabitants by indiscriminate plunder, letters of procrastination to the English and want of a nationalist goal had dwarfed his stature.² If the Kuṇḍara Proclamation is an indication, Vēlu Tampi of Travancore laboured under communal considerations. Marudu,

1. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1, p. 130.

2. Madras Council, 2 Oct. 1798, Revenue Consultations, Vol. 88, pp. 3111-8.

on the other hand, was guided not by selfish motive but a determination to regain the freedom of the country and thereby to promote the welfare of all people. The letter of Secretary Buchanan to Colonel Agnew dated 12 June 1861 admitted that though the Company gave him no cause of annoyance and treated him with indulgence, he organised the rebellion for the extermination of its authority. The Azirgarh Proclamation of Bahādur Shāh appealed to class distinctions in its bid to enlist the support of the rich to the Revolt of 1857 and threatened punishment of death and confiscation of property to deter others from supporting the enemy. The Śrīraṅgam Proclamation of Marudu, a remarkable document, indeed, called upon all the inhabitants, whether they were Hindus or Moslems, peasants or public servants, to unite and fight for independence. It proceeded to rebuke the disloyalty that they were wanting in valour and self-dignity and declared that by fighting for the liberation of the country they would gain immortal renown.

Political Ideals and Warlike Preparations

The greatest political thinker of his age, Marudu analysed the developments, wrought by European machinations, and their impact upon the society. He declared in categorical terms that the English established their political authority over the country and enslaved its people. This calamity overtook the land because of the folly of the princes, indifference of the inhabitants and duplicity of the Europeans. The local rulers unwisely entered into unequal alliance with alien powers and accepted subordinate status. The inhabitants, ignorant of the subtlety of European tactics, not only refused to rise against the common foe but made a collusion with it. The English, on the other hand, violated faith and established their authority. This deprived the states of their freedom, threatened the independence of the rest of the country and reduced the sons of the soil to poverty. The only remedy lay in the destruction of their political power and enforcement of their dependent status. To attain this grand objective there were two requisites: unity and warfare. As the British forces were better equipped than the inhabitants, guerilla tactics were to be adopted. Success in these ventures would liberate

the occupied territory, forestall the fall of the rest of India to alien domination and enable the inhabitants to live in peace and prosperity. Thereupon the rulers should be restored to their former exalted status but their authority must be balanced by the pongari system and established custom.³

Inspired by this exalted nationalist ideal, Marudu proceeded to translate it into action. Rāmraṁ Singh, Asad-ul-Zamān and the Rajahs of Bīrbhum and Burdwān in Bengal and Rajahs of Vijayanagaram and Pōlavēram in the Circars contented themselves with local resistance. Marudu on the other hand organised a rebellion of formidable proportions. "Foment insurrections throughout the country" and "by the support of the jungle harass the enemy and set it at defiance", he declared.⁴ Upon the fall of his ally Tipu Sultān in 1799, he saw the imperative necessity of promoting a union of patriotic interests of South India in defence of freedom. His alliance with Gōpāla Nāyak of Dindigul served as the nucleus. The rebels of Tamilnāḍu and Mysore frequented the thick woods of Dindigul and Sivagaṅga and held deliberations.⁵ Three missions were sent to the north and the support of the rebel chiefs, particularly Dhoondaji Waug of Shimoga, was won. The sphere of rebel activity extended from Naṅgunēri—Nāgore coast to Kolhāpūr—Shōlapūr region. The English now found themselves confronted with a challenge of a revolutionary organisation founded upon a revolutionary faith.⁶

The strategy of the rebel confederates placed Marudu at the command of their operations in the Madurai Country. Genius in the organisation of revolt, he prepared for a melancholy struggle. Powder, balls, rockets and other fire arms were manufactured, old arms were repaired and fresh supplies were

3. Revenue Sundries, Vol. 26, p. 148.

4. Amildar of Ooor, 18 March 1801, Report, Board of Revenue Proceedings, Vol. 291, p. 8733.

5. Board of Revenue, 28 Dec. 1801, Proceedings, Vol. 305, pp. 15362 and 15365.

6. K. Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion* (1971), p. 115.

obtained through the Bay of Tonḍi by employing large doneys. All were stored in the jungle of Kalayarkōil.⁷ Spies were sent to British camps to collect secrets about hostile movements. On hearing their reports Marudu confidently asserted "though twelve battalions should march against Sivaganga, they could venture to engage the enemy and set it at defiance with the help of the jungles."⁸ With grim determination the inhabitants evacuated the villages and trusted themselves entirely on the mountain recesses. They made the Temple of Kalayarkōil, their rallying centre, obviously because they considered their impending struggle as a crusade.

Dinḍigul conspiracy

In April 1800 when the preparations for the rebellion were in progress, the confederates held a conspiracy at Virūpākshi in Dinḍigul. It was attended by the delegates of Marudu Pāṇḍyan, Gōpāla Nāyak, Dhoondaji Waug and other rebel leaders of the South. The date of the conspiracy is not known. It appears that it was held on the 29th, for it is indicated that the deputies of Dhoondaji Waug reached the place on the 28th and returned to the north on the 30th, after the conclusion of the deliberations.⁹ Presided over by Gōpāla Nāyak, the rebel council formulated the strategy of war.¹⁰

It decided to launch a general offensive against the English with the occupation of the strategic fort of Coimbatore on the 3rd of June 1800—the last day of Muharram Feast, when the Mohamadan troops in the service of the Company were expected to be tired because of the celebrations of the previous days. Dhoondaji Waug agreed to send his cavalry to Coimbatore and Marudu consented to rise in rebellion on its appearance.

7. Board of Revenue, 29 May 1800, Proceedings, Vol. 252, pp. 4044-5.

8. Amildar of Ooor, 18 March. 1801, Report, Collectorate Records, Vol. 3579, p. 76.

9. Board of Revenue, 29 May 1800, Proceedings, Vol. 252, pp 4044-5.

10. W. Hurdis, 8 June 1800, Report to Board of Revenue, Individual Papers, No. 34.

Marudu Pandyan sent rebel parties in support of the insurgents of Diṇḍigul and Coimbatore for the capture of the fort. But the attempt failed. However Dhoondaji Waug and Kēraḷa Varma rose in rebellion in the north. Marudu waited for the appearance of Dhoondaji Waug's cavalry, but it did not come. Thereupon he sent his men to the south and engineered schemes to work out the escape of the relatives of Kaṭṭabomman, imprisoned at Pālayamkōṭṭai. This was effected on the 2nd of February 1801.¹¹ Immediately afterwards Marudu Pāṇḍyan sent 30,000 men to Tirunelvēli to join Sevitiaḥ and Oomathurai, the leaders of the rebellion in this region. The insurrection spread and the British garrisons were attacked and subdued. In the meantime Gōpāla Nāyak and his associates led the rebellion in Diṇḍigul.¹²

As the movement assumed formidable proportions, the enemy moved its troops from different parts of India and pressed into service the forces of its allied princes. The Nawab of Arcot and the Rajahs of Travancore and Thanjavur sent their forces in support of the English. The patriots now found their position precarious. They repulsed an attack on their stronghold, Pañjālamkurichi, on the 31st of March, but were defeated in a second attack on the 23rd of May.¹³ An army, commanded by Innes moved to Diṇḍigul. It routed the rebel forces and established its control over Diṇḍigul by May 1801.¹⁴ In consequence of these reverses in Tirunelvēli and Diṇḍigul, the broken ranks of insurgents escaped to Śivagaṅga. The cause of the Rebellion appeared desperate. At this juncture Marudu Pāṇḍyan, who had been directing the rebel operations in other regions, so long assumed the direct command of the struggle.

Marudu Pāṇḍyan's Proclamation

On the 16th of June 1801 the British administration received report of a proclamation, issued by Marudu Pāṇḍyan. A copy of

11. Madras Council, 10 Feb. 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 279,

12. Sevitiaḥ, letter to Rajah of Thanjavur, Military Consultations, 9 June 1801, Vol. 84, p. 4295.

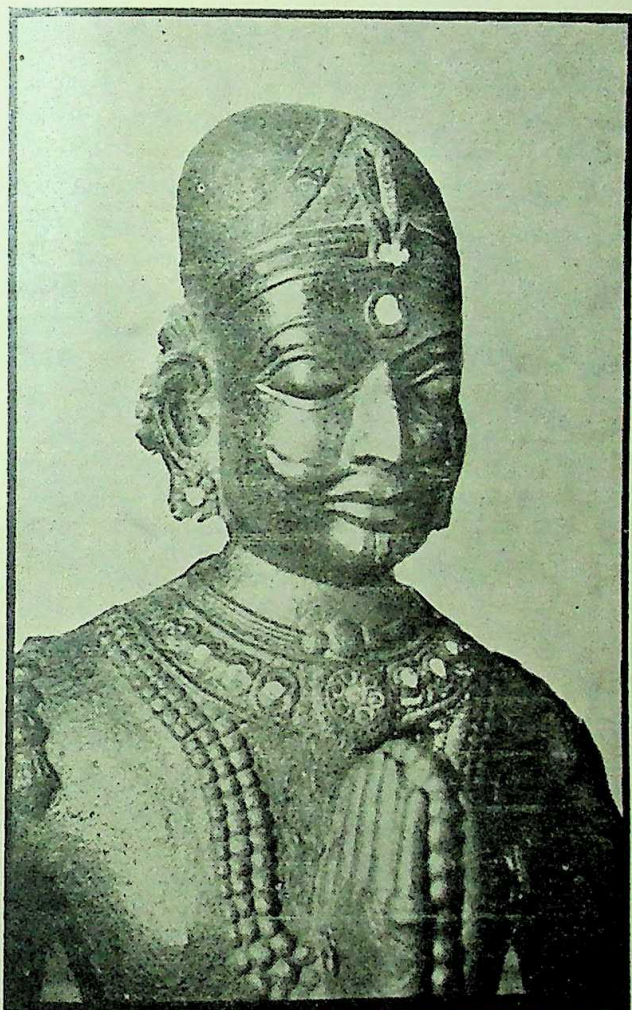
13. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1. p. 76.

14. Madras Council, 22 May 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 283 pp. 3520-70.

it was found posted upon one of the walls of the large open gateway leading to the Nawab's palace in the fort of Tiruchirapalli. It was addressed to the people of South India, mentioned in it as the peninsula of Jambu Dweepa. Another proclamation with identical contents mostly, was found on the wall of the great Temple of Śrīraṅgam. It was addressed to all the inhabitants of India, referred in it as the Island of Jambu.¹⁵ The selection of Tiruchirapalli and Śrīraṅgam as the venue of the proclamation was of significance. Tiruchirapalli was a centre of political activity, for it was the control of this strategic fort that enabled the English to turn the tide of their long struggle against the French in their favour and to consolidate their power in the South. Śrīraṅgam, being a Hindu spiritual centre, appeared as a suitable place for the issue of an appeal to all the people of the entire subcontinent.

Unique in the annals of India's freedom struggle, Marudu Pāṇḍyan's Proclamation constitutes a remarkable document. It enshrines in itself a combination of ideals and data as presented by a great patriot, hailing from the masses. An all-India concept inspired the proclamation, for it not only made a direct appeal to the entire country but expressed an anxiety that if the political malady was allowed to persist, the whole of India would fall under alien rule. It exhorted all religious and communal sections whether they were peasants, sepoys or civil servants, to rally to the patriotic cause. However the details are more of South Indian interest, as the rebels had no definite knowledge of the political developments in the East and the English had not yet established their sway in the north. It indicated the folly of Nawāb Mohammad Ali of the Carnatic, the indifference of the inhabitants, tactics of the foreign powers and consequences of British imperialism. The advocacy of the hereditary rights of the princes and national customs, made in the proclamation, would appear ill-conceived in the light of modern concepts of liberalism, but it could not be denied that it seemed a necessity for securing popular support during a period when tradition swayed the imagination of the inhabitants. The English version of the two proclamations which are almost identical in their contents proceeds thus:

15. Revenue Sundries, 10 July 1801, Vol. 26 pp 445-6.



MARUDU PANDYAN
(Statue in the Temple of Kalayarkoil)

"Whoever sees this Paper, Read it with Attension.

"To the Castes/nations/

Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vysyas, Sudras and Musselmen that are in the Island of Jemboo/in the peninsula of Jembu Dweepa/this notice is given.

"His Highness the Nawab Mohammad Ali having foolishly given the Europeans place amongst you is became like a widow. The Eurpeans violating their Faith have deceitfully made the Kingdom their own and considering the inhabitants as dogs, accordingly exercise authority over them. There existing no unity and friendship amongst you the above castes, who not aware of the duplicity of these Europeans—have not only inconsiderably calumniated each other, but have absolutely surrendered the Kingdom to them. In these countries now governed by these Low Wretches, the inhabitants have become poor and the rice became 'vellum' (water)¹⁶. And although they manifestly suffer, they are still without understanding to discern it. It is, certain that the Man must die although he may live a thousand years! And it is as certain that his fame will survive him as long as the Sun and Moon (shine). Therefore it is devised and determined that in future each shall enjoy his hereditary Rights, namely to His Highness the Nawab Arcot Subah, Vijaya Ramanah Tirumala Nayak the Carnatic, Tanjore the first place and to others their respective Kingdoms¹⁷—all to be given to their rightful sovereigns, without any violation of faith and national customs. (The Europeans must) confine themselves to a dependent service on the Nawab from which they may expect to derive a real and uninterrupted hap-

16. The proclamation indicates the great change that came in consequence of the British exploitation of the resources of the land. In the past the inhabitants could eat rice but after the establishment of British power they had, to content with mere rice-water.

17. The confederates had decided to restore the kingdoms to their princes. In the South Arcot Subah, situated between the rivers Guṇḍalakamma in the north and Vellār in the south, was to be returned to the direct rule of the Nawab, Tanjore to prince Serfoji who was deprived of it in 1799 and Madurai to Vijaya Ramnah Tirumala Nayak, a descendant of Queen Miṇṇakshi, the last ruler of the kingdom.

piness. As the authority of the Europeans will be destroyed, we shall enjoy as in the service of the Nawab constant happiness without tears.

"It is therefore recommended that every man in his place and palayam fly to arms and unite together in order to make even the name of the Low Wretches cease. Then all the poor and the needy will get subsistence. But should there be any who like dogs, desirous of an easy life obey the commands of these Low Wretches, such should be karoo or cut off. As all know with what subtlety these Low Wretches, always in unity with each other have subdued the country. Therefore you Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vysyas, Sudras and Musselmen, all who wear whiskers, whether civil or military, serving in the field or else where and your subedars, jamedars, havildars, nayaks and sepoys in the service of the Low Wretches and all capable of bearing arms, let them in the first place display their bravery as follows:

"Wherever you find any of the low wretches destroy them and continue to do so until they are extirpated. Whoever serves the low wretches will never enjoy eternal bliss after death, I know this. Consider and deliberate on it. And he who does not subscribe to this may his whiskers be like the hair of my secret parts and his food be tasteless and without nourishment and may his wife and children belong to another and be considered as the offspring of the low wretches to whom he had prostituted her. Therefore all but whose blood is not contaminated by Europeans will begin to unite. Whoever reads this or hears of its contents let him make it as public as possible by writing it to his Friends who in like manner must publish it to theirs. Every one who shall not write it and circulate it as before mentioned, let him be held as guilty of the enormous crime of having killed a black cow on the banks of the Ganga and suffer all the various punishments of hell. Then Musselmen who do not conform to this, let him be considered as having drunk the blood of a pig.

"Whoever takes this off the wall where it is pasted let him be held as guilty of the five greatest sins.¹⁸ Let everyone read

18. The five greatest sins are the killing of a Brahmin, adultery with the wife of the master, drinking of liquor, theft of gold and finally con-

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and take a copy of this address. Thus Marudu Pandyan, the servant of the great rajahs but the implacable Enemy of the European low wretches.

"To all living at Srirangam, the priests and great people, Marudu Pandyan prostrates himself at their feet. The sovereigns made and kept forts, the mud bastions, churches and chapels, The above great Rajahs and people by the injustice of the low wretches are now reduced to poverty. So great a people as you are reduced to this state. Grant me your Blessing."¹⁹

Rebel Offensive

On the fall of Pañjālamkurichi to the British forces, Oomathurai, the leader of the rebellion in Tirunelvēli, escaped to Sivagaṅga. In a clash with the enemy, he sustained six wounds. On the 28th May 1801, with his wounds still unhealed, he reached Kamudi. Marudu received him affectionately and took him to the rebel headquarters at Siruwayal. Immediately after, in a bid to check the progress of British forces, he launched a fierce counter-offensive. In the course of a bitter struggle, he not only administered a series of reverses upon the enemy but expelled its forces beyond River Kāvēri.

In May 1801 The rebels under the direct command of Marudu encountered the British. They defeated the forces of the Company, stationed at Tirupatore and Natham. Pillaging parties liberated Tiruvelur, Melur and Verapur. Oomathurai who by now regained his health led a column to Madurai, but finding the British troops strongly entrenched, made his course to Kadarakoil. Rebellion spread to Ramnad. The patriots stormed Palamaneri and Tiruchuzhi and forced the English to flee to the shelter of the Fort of Ramnad. The possession of the coastal region of Ramnad greatly contributed to the strength of the rebels. More of

nivance at doing any of these offences. While expiation can be had during the present life for ordinary sins, it cannot be had for the five greatest sins, for their effect will continue even after rebirth, according to the Hindu belief.

19. Revenue Sundries, 10 July 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 447-455.

the inhabitants rallied to the patriotic cause and supply routes were freed from threat of disruption. In July 1801 a body of rebels under Shevata Tambi, son of Marudu Pandyan, advanced to Thanjavur and on its appearance the inhabitants rose in arms voluntarily.²⁰ The rebels expelled the British troops from Pat-tukottai and occupied Mangudi. Advancing along the sea shore to Nagore,²¹ they moved to Shiali, Kumbakonam and Wodayar-palayam.²² In the liberated areas monigars were posted to look after the administration. As the result of these gains most of Madurai, Ramnad, Kallarnadu and Thanjavur fell under the control of Marudu Pandyan.

Threatened with the destruction of their authority, the English assembled their forces, rushed from different stations and directed Lt. Col. Agnew to take the command of the operations. Advancing from the south, the forces occupied Palamaneri, Tiruppuvanam, Tirupachetti and Manamadurai. Marching along the bank of the river, Palamaneri, the enemy captured Paramagudi on the 11th of June. Throughout the march the rebels hovered around and kept up a galling fire. They separated a body of troops from the main army which was cut to pieces. Harassed throughout the expedition, the enemy by forced marches reached the protection of the batteries of Ramnad.²³ Reinforced by troops sent from other quarters, Agnew now led another expedition to Komeri and from there reached Madurai on the 9th of July. Agnew spent the succeeding weeks at Madurai dispersing the rebel concentrations and consolidating his position. Subsequently, he commanded his army to Tirupatore and took it by storm on the 24th of July. He waited for making a junction with the forces of Innes, advancing from the west, before beginning the more difficult campaign in the jungle of Kalayarkoil.

The patriots strove hard to check the British expedition. The enemy reached Natham on the 13th June and received reinforce-

20. Military Consultations, 4 Aug. 1801 Vol. 286 p. 5332.

21. *Ibid*, 11 Aug. 1801, Vol. 286 p. 5643.

22. Board of Revenue, July 1801 Proceedings, Vol. 291 p. 8269.

23. Military Consultations, 21 June, 1801, Vol. 285, p. 4550.

ments from Pudukkottai²⁴ and on the 4th of July moved towards Manapacherri, situated eight miles away from Piranmalai—a fort, garrisoned by the rebels. Innes decided to attack Piranmalai but Agnew cautioned him against any attempt as the probability of success in his judgment did not strongly overbalance the risk of defeat. The assailants reconnoitered the rebel stronghold but judging their means inadequate, did not venture. On the 6th the insurgents began a heavy fire on the British positions. Two days later the columns led by Vella Marudu and Chinna Marudu attacked the British forces, pressed vigorously on their lines and drove them off.²⁵ As the situation of Innes appeared precarious, Agnew moved towards Tirupatore and took such a position as to assist the operations of the besieged. On the 18th detachment of Innes launched a second attack on Piranmalai but was again defeated with heavy loss. Thwarted in their repeated endeavours, the British forces made another humiliating retreat to Natham.²⁶ On the 22nd upon the arrival of reinforcements, Innes moved to Satturusankarakottai, situated six miles away from Tirupattore. The forces continued their march through a close wood but on the 26th the rebels who had occupied strong positions in the front, perceiving their advantage, attacked the enemy, using rockets for the first time. Losing no time, Agnew advanced to the relief of hard-pressed Innes and forced the besieging crowds to withdraw to the woods.²⁷ The combined forces now took their route from Tirupattore in favour of an assault on Piranmalai and to establish communications with Pudukkottai. Subsequently however they decided to change their direction as the road to Piranmalai was of difficult access, being intersected by hills and jungles and occupied by large groups of picked men, ready to challenge. On the 28th of July the forces encamped at Okkur. As the British found a pitched battle in defence of the town risky, they evacuated.²⁸

24. Madras Council, 18 June 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 285, p. 4559.

25. Revenue Sundries, 9 July 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 623-7.

26. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 286, pp. 5348-9.

27. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 286, pp. 5348-9 and 5367-70.

28. Revenue Sundries, 28 July 1801, Vol. 26 pp. 640-8.

Assisted by the princes of Thanjavur and Pudukkottai, the Company assembled a large force for an eastern campaign on the banks of the Kaveri. Not only did Rajah Serfaji and the Tondaiman assist the enemy but incited the inhabitants particularly the warlike Kallans to fight against the patriots. This internal dissension greatly weakened the rebel influence in the Kaveri basin.²⁹ On the 17th July the combined forces of the English and their allied princes, commanded by Blackburn, commenced the operations. In the battles of Arandangy and Adiarkudi the rebels were defeated. Mounting pressure and internal discord forced the insurgents to evacuate the northern region of Thanjavur and to withdraw to the jungles, stretching to the south.³⁰

The Coastal Campaign

Though an extensive region of Thanjavur remained under the rebel domination, the English made no immediate attempt to re-occupy it. The insurgents, led by Marudu Pandyan and Oomathurai, encamped in Palaynad and lay in wait to cut off Innes's retreat from Tirumayam. They reconstructed their post at Arriaworlawoody, which Innes had destroyed, and garrisoned it with 5000 armed men, while 3000 took their position in the village of Kundadive, situated eight miles away from Shawkottai.³¹ Anxious to draw the rebels from the route of Innes's retreat, Blackburn, who commanded the forces in Thanjavur, marched to Shawkottai and reached Kundanoor in Palanad. He sent a probing expedition to the rebel camp but was driven back. In a bid to intercept Blackburn's advance but without understanding the real intentions of the enemy, a large section of the insurgents, posted at Tirupatore advanced to a distance of twenty miles, which prevented it to act in co-operation with the column, led by Marudu Pandyan and Oomathuri. As this diversion turned favourable, the detachment of Innes moved out from Tirumayam on the 28th of

29. Madras Council, 8, 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 286 pp 5518.

30. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, p. 5380-4.

31. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, p. 6932.

August and transmitted a message to Blackburn that it reached a secure distance. Having effected his objective in affording relief to Innes but forbidden by prudence to remain at Palaynad because of the possibility of rebel flanking operations both from Kundadive and Arriawortawoody, the detachment of Blackburn by forced marches retreated to Arandangy.³² From here he sent two expeditions, one to the south and the other to the west. The southern expedition, led by Lieutenant Maclean, went into operation against the rebels of Ramnad in co-operation with the forces of Macaulay, which reached from Tirunelvēli. The western expedition, headed by Jen Kondan, advanced to Terboinad in Sivaganga, the inhabitants of which territory offered their steadfast support to the rebellion in disregard to the Company's offers of pardon and oblivion. In support of this expedition Blackburn himself marched to within twenty miles of Siruwayal. The British forces displaying a vindictive spirit cut down the fleeing population and burnt down the villages.³³

Having the rebel power of resistance in Thanjavur greatly crippled, the British army, reinforced by the troops of Pudukkottai and Ettayapuram, moved in strength against Ramnad. Macaulay from the south and the Maclean from the north. As Agnew threatened Siruwayal, Vella Marudu who was engaged in the siege of Komeri, returned to the west after entrusting the task with Muthu Karuppa Tevar. On the 13th of August a body of troops, led by Miller moved to Komeri at the orders of Macaulay, repulsed the siege and dispersed the insurgents.³⁴ The enemy gained more victories in the actions that followed. The combined forces of Martinz and Miller attacked and expelled the rebels, who had encamped in the vicinity of the Fort of Ramnad, waiting for an opportunity to assault this stronghold of the enemy. On the 27th of August, Macaulay routed the armed parties of Melappan, an associate of Marudu in a fiercely contested battle at Abiramam, but the rebel chief made his escape.³⁵ Maclean in the

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 6925-30.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 6943-51.

34. Revenue Sundries, 7 September 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 673-5.

35. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6850-6.

meantime embarked on a difficult campaign from Arandangy through the rebel-held territories towards Ramnad. On the 29th of August he defeated the rebels and stormed the key post of Waroor, in consequence of which he regained possession of the territory extending from the borders of Thanjavur and Sivaganga to the Fort of Ramnad.³⁶ Anxious to relieve the hard-pressed rebels of the east Marudu Pandyan sent a body of 3000 armed men under the command of Oomañhurai, but as the threat to Kalayarkoil assumed serious proportions, he soon called them off. Enabled by these successes, Macaulay left Ramnad by the end of September and advanced to the borders of Sivaganga to assist in the operations of Agnew in the jungles of Kalayarkoil.³⁷

British Humiliation in Kalayarkoil

Siruwayal, the headquarters of Marudu Pandyan, was a clean town with broad and regular streets and well built houses.³⁸ On the 27th of July the combined forces of Agnew and Innes began their march from Okkur to Siruwayal. The enemy experienced no fierce opposition for the first two days, but afterwards they found its task formidable, for it had to manoeuvre for every inch of land. The road passed through a cultivated tract, situated between two jungles but was interrupted by high banks and extensive rows of palmyra trees, which gave excellent cover to the rebels in every direction. Parties of insurgents, who had occupied all the banks and woods on the way, harassed the troops from the commencement to the end of a short but tedious march. When they were pushed from the front, the crowds moved round to the flanks and rear and accompanied the detachment with a constant and teasing fire. Waging a continuous war against the hordes, the forces encamped within two miles of Siruwayal on the 29th. The next day the troops moved to attack the defiant town. The rebels had made entrenchments connected with the strong bunds of the tanks, advantageously situated to support each other. A small battery was regularly formed in their centre. The armed groups

36. *Ibid*, pp. 6943-51.

37. *Ibid*, pp. 6960-1.

38. James Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1, p. 92.

collected together but when Agnew made a disposition to attack the flanks of their line and advanced forward with a heavy fire, they abandoned their positions. They set fire to the beautiful town and nearby villages and under the cover of a distant fire withdrew to the barriers in the jungles of Kalayarkoil. As all the forage was destroyed and as the country afforded no grazing field for the numerous pack cattle, the enemy experienced considerable difficulty. The assailants entered the destroyed town and had a clear look at the tower of the Pagoda of Kalayarkoil, which was visible beyond over the woods.³⁹

On the 31st of July powerful detachments commenced the operations against the rebel strongholds in the jungles. The insurgents assembled in strength, ready to contest the hostile venture. Large groups of pioneers and wood cutters, who were pressed into service by Agnew, began the work on a road for the advance of the army. On the 11th of August Agnew wrote to Madras: the pioneers and wood cutters have laboured incessantly but the increasing closeness of the jungle had retarded their progress so much that the road was still unfinished. The supply of labour was reduced by sickness and desertion, due to the dread of the rebel fire, to which they were frequently exposed. On the night of the 14th August the road had been advanced five miles and the Pagoda of Kalayarkoil was seen over the trees; it appeared less than a mile away on the 11th of morning. When the working party was about to resume the work, a battery of several guns concealed by the rebels in the jungles burst and rendered the continuance of the work impossible.⁴⁰

On the 15th insurgents launched a vigorous attack upon the British lines. Unable to withstand the assault the enemy retreated from its forward positions.⁴¹ The next day the rebels

39. Revenue Sundries, 31 July 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 649-51.

40. Agnew, letter to Madras, Military Consultations, 20 October 1801, Vol. 288, pp. 6837-9.

41. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6837-9.

resumed the attack and forced the English to discontinue the work on the road. On the 19th they fired several sarabogies, a kind of park guns, used for firing salutes. Immediately armed parties assembled from different directions and began a sharp fire from all sides. Carried away by a combination of rashness and daring, they besieged very closely the hostile positions, well defended by heavy guns. Finding the opportunity the British batteries discharged a few rounds. Screams and groans followed. Intermittent fire continued from the distant posts of the rebels but a few moments later all were hushed. The patriots suffered heavy loss and the blood of the fleeing was traceable in every direction in the jungles. Despite the terrible losses the rebels continued their bitter resistance with indomitable courage. The English forces succeeded in beating the besieging crowds every hour but the moment they felt relieved, they found themselves surrounded and attacked from all sides. The insurgents taking their positions under the cover of banks and entrenchments, against which the troops could seldom move because of the thickness of the jungle, baffled every attempt made by the enemy to establish itself. The heavy losses that they suffered in every action appeared to have had no impact upon their patriotic will to resist. The reverses suffered by the forces of the Company and their constant exposure to the burning sky greatly dispirited them. The pioneers found it no more possible to continue the work on the road.⁴² Driven to desperate straits, Agnew sought to establish communications with the other British posts, to gain reinforcements, to elude the vigilance of the gallant patriots and to escape assault by frequent showers of bullets, yet found himself repeatedly baffled and thwarted. The humiliation, that appeared unsurmountable, reduced him to the alternative of retreat. On the 26th of August the British forces took their route back to Tirupatore and from there to Partimangalam and then to Siruwayal. The rebels chased the retreating enemy for a long distance. On the 30th Agnew and Innes decided to abandon their project of advancing to Kalayarkoil from the direction of Siruwayal.⁴³

42. Revenue Sundries, 21 August 1801, Vol. 26, p. 659.

43. Madras Council, 4 August 1801, Military Consultations Vol. 286, p. 390.

A body of troops, led by Innes, moved to Tirumayam to gather provisions. On its return to Siruwayal, the insurgents attacked it but their attempt to ambush the enemy failed. The armed groups collected in strength in the jungles in preparation for a counter attack. Considering his position quite vulnerable Agnew ordered his forces to retreat to Okkur and from there to Nellikottai. Subsequently, however, the tide of events turned in favour of the Company. The British King's Scotch Brigade, Blackburn's detachments and the Tondaiman's troops rushed for the relief of Agnew's forces. Tempted by the Company's offer of the throne of Sivaganga, Woya Tevar of the royal house of this territory too went to the aid of the enemy.⁴⁴

Destruction of Rebel Sea Power.

The destruction of the vessels, employed by the insurgents for the importation of grain and arms, had engaged the attention of the Company for long. Several doneys, steered by oars, brought large supplies across the seas both from the northern and southern directions. Four hundred men, employed in the service of the rebels, regularly transported the imports to the jungles of Sivaganga. This enabled them to harass the enemy despite the destruction of their fields. Intelligence that the Company obtained, indicated that the doneys brought in large supplies to the harbour of Tondi. As the disruption of communication with the sea was essential for the destruction of the power of resistance, the Company pressed a gun boat into service to patrol the coastal waters.⁴⁵

Before day-break on the 4th of September 1801 Schuler, the gun boat, went into operation in the Bay of Tondi. At 7 A.M. it attacked and seized two large doneys, laden with paddy and bound for Pamban. It learned from the crew that two more doneys, each with twenty armed rebels, were heading towards the port of Tondi. Before long the cutter came across them and chased them till 9 A.M. But a calm sea prevented the gun boat from its pursuit and enabled the rebel vessels to escape by means

44. Revenue Sundries. 1 September 1801. Vol. 26. p. 665.

45. Tinnevely Collectorate Records. 20 August 1801. No. 3579. pp. 88 and 115.

of their oars. When the wind began to blow and became favourable, the Schuler resumed the hunt and steered for Tondi, where it reached at 5 P.M. but only to discover all the doneys lying dry on the shore and the cargo already unloaded. The boat cruized the shore waters for two days. In an action it overpowered six doneys and captured them. The British sailors advancing to the shore, set fire to numerous vessels, which were found deserted. On the 8th the insurgents, about a hundred in number, made a daring attempt to attack the gun boat. Emerging out of their huts on the shore of Pamban, they rushed to the sea water up to four feet deep and shot a few but distant rounds. The cutter moving to a favourable position, opened a well directed fire and repulsed the attack. Many of the rebels were killed and their bodies were found floating on the sea.⁴⁶ The loss of numerous vessels and control of the Bay of Tondi inflicted a severe blow to the sustaining forces of resistance.

The Divided Camp of Rebels

The enemy followed up the blockade of the Bay of Tondi with a successful attempt at the creation of dissensions within the ranks of the insurgents. Having failed in persuading Vella Marudu to join the side of the Company against his brother Chinna Marudu, the English promoted rivalry in the ruling house of Sivaganga. At the instance of the Company, Padmattur Woya Tevar, a member of the royal family, contested the claims of Vengum Peria Wodaya Tevar, the ruler, under whom Marudu served as minister.

As no followers could be obtained, the Tondaiman hired out 250 of his peons for service with Woya Tevar. Escorted by them, Woya Tevar reached the camp of Blackburn at Arandangy on the 12th of August. As it was of importance to project the image of the rival prince, the troops of the Company accorded a pompous welcome and Blackburn reported to Madras: "I caused the line to fall in and salute Woya Tevar as he passed, and received him

46. Board of Revenue, 28 September 1801, Proceedings, Vol. 298, pp. 12080-3.

with those marks of distinction which I thought the best calculated to make a strong impression of the reality of the elevation upon the rebellious provinces.⁴⁷ From Arandangy Woya Tevar, accompanied by more men, proceeded to the camp of Agnew in Sivaganga. On the 12th of September 1801 at a ceremonious function, attended with the display of show and splendour, deliberate though they were, at Cholapuram, the ancient capital of Sivaganga, Agnew proclaimed Woya Tevar as the rajah of the state.⁴⁸

The elevation of Woya Tevar to a show of royal status misguided the simple-minded inhabitants. As a prince of the ruling house joined the Company, it exercised an adverse impact upon their loyalty to the cause of Rebellion. The people of Nellikkottai, Okkur, Errecoor, Pattimangalam and Paghinery deserted the camp of the insurgents and went over to the side of Woya Tevar. The intimate knowledge of the woods of Kalayarkoil, possessed by these deserters, the guidance given by Woya Tevar and the dissensions made in the rebel camp greatly assisted the Company in its subsequent operations.⁴⁹

Fall of Kalayarkoil

The Pagoda of Kalayarkoil, the rallying point of the patriots and the target of British offensive, was a beautiful structure, surrounded by a stone wall, eighteen feet in height. The rebels humbled the enemy in the first thrust, but the subsequent turn of events greatly eroded their power of defence and counter attack. The control of the coastal waters had been lost, vast territories had been reoccupied and the unity of their ranks had been shaken. The Company employed Khaleel, who appeared closely acquainted with the rebel positions, to gather intelligence

47. Blackburne, 12 August 1801, letter to Secretary Webbe, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6908.

48. Revenue Sundries for 1801, Vol. 26, p. 48 and—Madras Council, 7 July 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 285, p. 4873.

49. Revenue Sundries for 1801, Vol. 26 p. 48 and Madras Council 7 July 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 285, p. 4873.

for the formulation of a new strategy against Kalayarkoil.⁵⁰ Disguised as hunters, Khaleel and his select men explored the jungles, discovered the secret routes leading to the Pagoda of Kalayarkoil and safely returned to the British camp.⁵¹ Guided by them, Agnew carried out fresh preparations for an expedition from Okkur instead of from Siruvayal. After the proclamation of Woya Tevar as the ruler of Sivaganga, the detachments left Cholapuram and marching through Melur reached Singampunari on the 19th of September. As the occupation of rebel forts in this jungle was of consequence for the success of the expeditions, Agnew detached two forces: one to Piranmalai which withstood the repeated assaults made by Innes and to Nandikottai. The overwhelming military superiority which the enemy brought to bear upon the rebel strongholds enabled it to crush resistance and to reduce the posts to submission.⁵² The triumphant army reached Okkur, where Innes in the mean time employed pioneers to strengthen its defences and stored provisions in preparation of the expedition to Kalayarkoil.⁵³

On the 30th of September 1801 British detachments advanced to Kalayarkoil from all directions. In an attempt to mislead the rebels Agnew announced that he had decided to storm the fort in the evening of the 1st of October and detached a party to the town of Sivaganga, so that they might expect an offensive from that direction. Thereupon he decided to push through Vaniamkudi, Collumbum and Muthoor. The road leading to Collumbum was found blocked up by thorny fences. The detachment was fired on near its entrance from a barrier within the jungle. Agnew detached a party to turn the flank of the rebels, while a gun that was mounted in front, opened a fire to draw away the rebel attention. The troops suffered considerable loss in this action but succeeded in dislodging the armed columns from their

50. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6856-6.

51. Sivaganga Charithira Kummi,

52. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6844 and 6859.

53. Revenue Sundries, 5 September 1801, Vol. 26 p. 667.

post. On approaching Muthoor a rebel party which had taken its stand on a bank in front of the village, opened a distant fire but was forced on to withdraw to the interior of the wood. Another detachment, led by Innes in the meantime moved towards Chola-puram, after which it turned in the direction of Kalayarkoil. He reported to Agnew that the insurgents strongly posted in the barriers, which were raised across an extremely difficult road, received his detachment with a heavy fire but were discharged by a gallant charge. In this battle a hundred of the rebels were killed. The forces reached Keeranoor, situated in the vicinity of Kalayarkoil and proceeded with the reduction of Kallangudi.⁵⁴ The Scotch Brigade led by Lieutenant Colonel Spry advanced through the direct road from Okkur to Kalayarkoil, while another expedition commanded by Major Sheppard moved through another route, ready to assist Spry's Scotch Brigade. The forces of Macaulay and Blackburn after their campaigns in Ramnad attacked the jungles from the south and from the east respectively. The offensives were so co-ordinated as to out-manoeuvre the patriots and to avert a second humiliation to the British flag.⁵⁵

The encircling advance of the hostile forces from different directions threw the rebel columns into panic. The Scotch Brigade advancing through a close wood launched an attack on the Pagoda at the dawn of the 1st of October. The rebel opposition barriers on the Muthoor road and the darkness of the night had so much impeded the march of Agnew that he could not reach the rebel stronghold until 8 A.M. The other detachments however overwhelmed all resistance on the roads and encircled the Pagoda in accordance with the pre-concerted plan. Marudu Pandyan led his column into action against the forces of Agnew, but finding the Pagoda threatened from other directions, rushed to take over the command of the defences. However it too late, for the insurgents were thrown into confusion and all his endeavours to restore order among the ranks failed. He reached Kalayarkoil barely in time to remove his people to safety. Many of the rebels died in bitter contests, while the survivors fled,

54. Revenue Sundries, 21 October 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 697-9

55. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, p. 6837.

apparently without concert.⁵⁶ The fall of Kalayarkoil broke patriotic resistance. The enemy captured a large quantity of ammunition, deposited in the jungles. In recognition of the meritorious service and the guidance given to Spry in the operations, Agnew awarded one hundred pagodas to Khaleel.

The principal leaders of the rebellion took their route to Mungalam. In a bid to apprehend them Agnew sent his forces in that direction, while he himself continued to occupy a station on the western side of the woods of Kalayarkoil. Captain Munro led a party in search of the fugitives but did not come across any. Expresses were sent to Macaulay and Blackburn, urging them to be on the alert but the rebels already effected their escape.⁵⁷ A body of the insurgents, led by Oomathurai, Sevitiah and Muthu Vella Nayak, moved in a northern direction through Tirupatore, while another party headed by Marudu Pandyan found its way to the jungles of Singampunari.⁵⁸ The Tondaiman sent out numerous parties to comb the rebel resorts in the woods. He captured more than hundred families of the fugitives and handed them over to the custody of the British troops.⁵⁹ Blackburn and Maclean proceeded with the occupation of territories, still retained by the armed groups of Ramnad. Their detachments scattered a column of 2000 rebels in a battle, fought at Shawkottai. On the 5th of October Blackburn advanced to Karaikudi, separated from Shawkottai by an extension of the jungle of Singampunari, seven miles in depth and uncommonly close and strong. A body of troops in the meantime went into operation at his orders in another extension of the same jungle, that separated Karaikudi from Siruwayal. Assisted by the forces of the Tondaiman, Blackburn occupied the rebel posts and consolidated his control.⁶⁰

56. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6864-7.

57. Revenue Sundires, 21 October 1801, Vol. 26, pp. 700-702.

58. Madras Council, 20 October 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 288, pp. 6895-7 and 6936.

59. *Ibid*, p. 6959.

60. *Ibid*, p. 6975.

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On the 19th of October 1801 Marudu Pandyan was engaged in an action at Cholapuram, wounded and captured.⁶¹ The troops which were employed in the jungles, seized the other rebels of note too. Many of the patriots escaped to the inhospitable woods of Anamalai, where they died of fever.⁶² On the 24th of October 1801 Marudu Pandyan, together with his brother Vella Marudu and a horde of other patriots, was executed on the ruins of the Fort of Tirupatore in Ramnad district.⁶³ James Welsh, an officer in the British army, has given a brief note on the last days of this hero. He had observed: after Chinna Marudu was defeated in the battle of Kalayarkoil, he was chased like a wild beast, was badly wounded and captured. He was seen lingering with a fractured thigh in prison and was lastly beheld with his gallant brother Vella Marudu and no less gallant son, Shevata Tambi, surrounded by other insurgents, in chains upon a common gibbet.⁶⁴ The followers of Marudu carried his body to Kalayarkoil, buried it near the Tank of the Great Temple and erected a small tomb in his memory.

Marudu Pandyan, like many other patriots before him and after, failed in attaining his objective. He sacrificed his life as the price of his failure. The causes of his failure were not because of factors which were in his control. The Indian powers particularly the Marathas and the Nizam and the princes like those of the Carnatic, Travancore, Thanjavur and Mysore rallied to the cause of the enemy. The enemy had a disciplined and well equipped army and the control of the sea. Added to these, the English divided the rebel ranks and created dissensions among them.

However it cannot be denied that Marudu Pandyan was an enlightened patriot who set the ideal of one India before his people and saw the necessity of the destruction of British power in South India to forestall the fall of the rest of the subcontinent to alien sway. Despite his peasant background, he not only did correctly analyse the causes of the political malady but did evolve right

61. Madras Council, 1 Dec. 1801, Military Consultations, Vol. 289, p. 7671.

62. T. B. Hurdies, 22-10-1801, letter to Board of Revenue, Proceedings, Vol. 301, p. 13004.

63. Military Despatches to England, 20 Oct. 1802, Vol. 33, p. 668

64. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. 1, p. 130.

remedy. His military strategy required political unity, confederation of rebel forces, guerilla warfare and simultaneous insurrection throughout the country. The exalted nationalism that he cherished and the daring venture that he made and the martyrdom that he met with in pursuit of his vision make him the greatest of the patriots of India of the British period before the Nationalist Movement.



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1. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona.
2. *Brahma Vidya, The Adyar Library Bulletin*, Madras.
3. *Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Delhi.
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